Women in the rural society of south-west Wales, c.1780-1870.

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Women in the Rural Society of south-west Wales, c.1780-1870

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis 'Women in the Rural Society of south-west Wales, c.1780-1870' is the result of my independent investigation and that all indebtedness to other sources is acknowledged by explicit references in the text or in the notes to the text.

I declare further that this thesis has not already been accepted in whole or in part for any degree, and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any other degree.

Candidate: .....

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Date: .....30 September 2003.....

Abstract

This thesis has sought to fill a gap in Welsh social history in its focusing on women's role and status in *rural* society. It is claimed, moreover, that the period covered allows us to capture the position of women within the traditional rural economy before the huge changes setting in during the final decades of the nineteenth century, not least the movement of women out of agriculture, and, of many, out of the countryside altogether, worked for the young in particular a profound change in their circumstances.

The approach is an overarching one which deliberately seeks to explain the subject from as wide a perspective as possible. As such, it may be open to criticism that insufficient focus is given to certain areas as women's migration, spinsterhood, old age and to those few privileged females occupying the middling and upper ranks in society. The defence I make in adopting this comprehensive treatment is that it the more easily allows us to perceive the total world inhabited by women and to appreciate their predicament within the larger society.

The thesis falls naturally into two sections, namely, first, women's participation in the rural workforce and their material circumstances, and, second, their public responsibilities and recreational pursuits and their private lives. The three chapters in section one cover female employment, women and the domestic economy, and coping with poverty. It will be demonstrated how precarious life was for small farmers' and cottagers' families and the vital role which women played in their continuing survival; of significance here was the fact that young girls were expected to enter farm service and domestic service in order to support themselves.

Section two will examine their life outside the sphere of work. This will, firstly, explore their recreation and leisure activities and seek to understand their system of values and beliefs. The discussion will then turn to examining women's public role within the community, and here particular attention will be drawn to their importance as providers of nurture and care and as upholders of the community's morality and enforcers of what they perceived as natural justice. In the second place, the discussion will focus on women's private and domestic lives. The main themes here will cover marriage and sexuality, which exploration will range over aspects like illegitimacy, wife-beating, adultery and infanticide. The overwhelming disadvantaged position of women within matters pertaining to sexuality and private relations will be emphasised.

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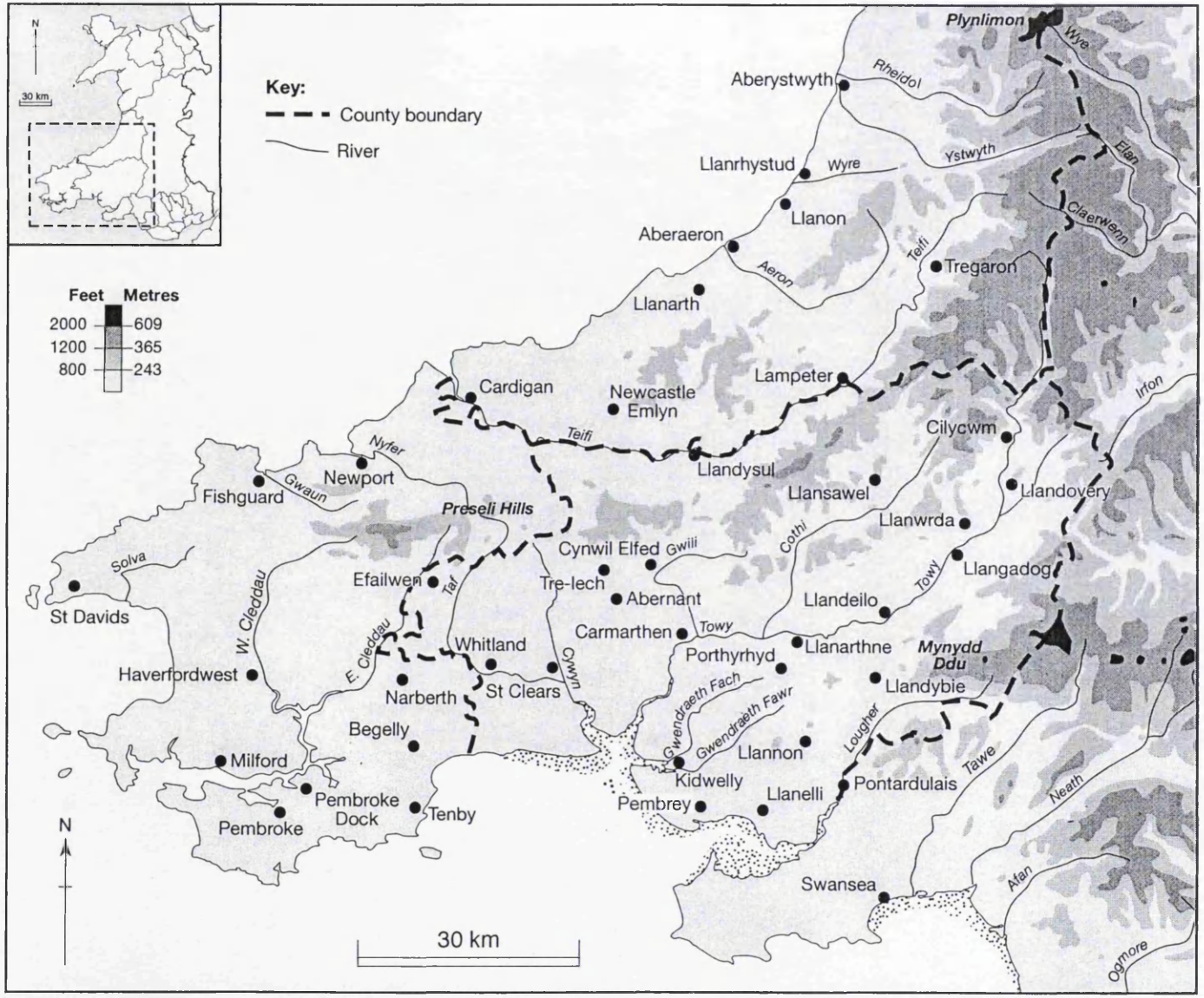
Contents

	Abstract	
	Acknowledgements	
	Relief and Settlement Map of south-west Wales	1
	Introduction	2
Part I	**The Material World**	
1	Female Employment	17
2	Wives and the Domestic Economy: A Multiplicity of Roles	59
3	Coping with Poverty	101
Part II	**Public and Private Lives**	
4	Beliefs, Culture and Sociability	137
5	Public Life, Protest and Popular Politics	172
6	Aspects of Marriage	208
7	A Question of Sex	243
	Epilogue	297
	Bibliography	318



Relief and settlement map of South-West Wales

Introduction

When a pioneering Deirdre Beddoe focused on the omission of Welsh women from the history books in her paper "Towards a Welsh women's history", published in 1981, she alerted the people of Wales to a wide gap in the country's historiography which urgently needed addressing.[1] Certain reasons were forwarded to explain this omission; in a male-dominated society, and with Welsh historians themselves mainly male, there was a bias, however non-conspiratorial and unconscious, towards writing about the history of men.[2] That omission, she observed before an audience of Welsh labour historians, extended to Welsh labour history. Her explanation was that like British labour historians in general, those writing of their Welsh experience confined themselves to labour organisation and work, waged labour at that, wherein males enjoyed an overwhelming dominance of numbers and influence. Beddoe was to return to her theme in her chapter entitled "Images of Welsh women", published in 1986.[3] Her opening statement was uncompromising: "Welsh women are culturally invisible. Wales, land of my fathers, is a land of coalminers, rugby players, and male voice choirs. Welsh cultural identity is based almost entirely on the existence of these three main groups." Left out were, she observed, Welsh women, classes other than the working class, and occupational groups outside the industrial sector. In an attempt to explain women's absence, she developed her earlier arguments of 1981; three powerful factors were at work, namely, "Patriarchy, Capitalism and History".[4] By the latter, she meant the tendency of middle-class male historians to select the past deeds of men.

Beddoe acknowledged in her 1981 lecture that there were cheering exceptions, not the least in the field of women and labour the rich, recent study of Angela John entitled *By the Sweat of their Brow*. But these were exceptions, and she concluded by making certain suggestions for Welsh labour historians to follow in undertaking future research: for instance,

the notion of the word "labour" should be widened to include all kinds of work, paid and unpaid; again, the existence of working-class "families", as distinct from merely working-class men and their wives, should be acknowledged; and, finally, historians should seek out evidence for women's struggle "wherever it took place".[5] In calling for this new approach Beddoe was echoing what had become a rallying call amongst Britain's female historians. During the last few decades of the twentieth century, the popularizing of social history allied with the re-emergence of the feminist movement in the late 1960s and 1970s saw women's history come out from the historical wilderness as a subject worthy of close scrutiny and wider research.[6] Heightened female awareness and solidarity spurred a forging of interest in examining women's past lives resulting in their history at last finding its voice.

Welsh women's history, as a subject on its own, accordingly came to be addressed with the publication of a number of well-researched and ground-breaking books and papers. Some measure of a female presence also appeared in mainstream social histories. True to her convictions, Deirdre Beddoe has made a significant contribution; her main studies include *Welsh Convict Women* (1979), *Discovering Women's history: a practical manual (1983)*, *Back to Home and Duty: women between the wars, 1918-1939* (1989) and *Out of the Shadows: a social history of women in twentieth-century Wales* (2000).[7] Important, too, in advancing the study of women's lives in Wales were the three interdisciplinary books published under the collective "our", namely *Our Mothers' Land* (1991), *Our Sisters' Land* (1994), and *Our Daughters' Land* (1996). The moving spirit behind these latter works was Angela John who, in her thoughtful introduction, as editor to *Our Mothers' Land*, was to forward her own view as to the reasons for the previous neglect of women in Welsh historical writing. She highlighted the strong labour tradition in south-east Wales with its emphasis on male-dominated trade unionism and the small participation of women within the formal economy.[8] Journals, too, like the "woman friendly", *Llafur* (the Journal of Welsh Labour

History), *Planet* and *Radical Wales*, have published articles relating to Welsh women's experiences. These publications, books and articles alike, have explored women's activity within the political arena, the field of education, the religious sphere, including the closely-related temperance movement, and the worlds of work and domesticity. A central concern in the treatment of work and domesticity has been to expose and explain the many inaccurate nineteenth-century images of Welsh women. Particular attention in this respect has been paid to the notion of the pure and gentle woman and also to that of the stereotypical "Welsh mam", the partly mythical figure said to dominate Welsh family life in the coal mining communities of the south-east valleys.[9]

Although much has been done in recent years, arguably the study of women's history in Wales is still only in its youthful stage in terms of volume of output and breadth of study. Serious gaps have left important questions concerning a host of issues and subject matters pertaining to women still waiting to be researched and answered. Of significance for this study, little attention has been given to the study of women in rural Wales. This is not an oversight confined to Wales, however, for it has been recognised elsewhere that the subject represents "an enormous breadth of historical experience that has been sadly neglected over many decades".[10] While undoubtedly some areas of female historical research span the urban/ rural continuum, as, for instance, the issue of temperance, and while childbirth is a female experience both in town and country, there are nevertheless significant polarities differentiating the lives of women in the two settings which call for separate treatment. Countrywomen deserve their own history.

Much of our knowledge of Welsh rural women has come from incidental evidence found in more general Welsh history accounts such as county-based histories and journals carrying rural-based topics. David Jenkins' socio-anthropological study of the agricultural communities in south-west Wales at the turn of the twentieth century is one which has

become greatly valued as a source of reference for offering rare and illuminating insights into the lives of rural women.[11] Rich pickings can also be gleaned from accounts of Welsh folk customs, particularly within the work of Trevor Owen and from the informative journal, *Folklife*, where Minnie Tidwell, amongst others, has enriched our understanding of women's contribution to country lore and craft.[12] These are but a few. Regrettably, very few studies have focused exclusively on the lives of rural women. What there is has proved scholarly and innovative. Within *Our Mothers' Land* selective topics chosen for discussion include Russell Davies' myth-dispelling account of female suicide in Carmarthenshire and Rosemary Jones' brilliant analysis of women's participation in the community-activated shaming ritual, "ceffyl pren". In addition, several other chapters within this work have relevance, most notably Sian Rhiannon Williams' account of the prescriptive images of femininity contained in women's Welsh periodicals. Elsewhere, women's work in early nineteenth-century Anglesey has come under scrutiny, while a wider examination of women's work in the Principality includes a study highlighting the differing participation rates in employment between rural and urban women which has emerged from exploring census material.[13] Other wide-ranging areas of study have included female involvement in rural trade unions, the impact on women of the nineteenth-century Poor Laws, the sexual harassment of female servants, infanticide and crime.[14] It remains the case, however, that no study has emerged which gives an overall picture of women's lives in rural Wales.

What were the realities of life for Welsh countrywomen? From the eighteenth century onward, especially, rurality has come to be be viewed as a pastoral idyll, most notably by those seeking meaning in a rapidly industrialising age.[15] Wales is no exception. Travellers visiting the Principality in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were inclined to describe bucolic Utopias amidst scenic countryside. By focusing on the healthiness, purity and innocence of rural living, the benefits of country life were contrasted

favourably with what were thought to be the horrors of life in rapidly expanding industrial towns. While readily acknowledging the poverty of the inhabitants, a contented peacefulness was said to reign, where women lived happily within sun-washed rural cottages, however humble.[16] In the midst of poverty, women appeared as "cheerful, contented, happy people".[17] Critics, however, presented a contrasting and less-than-perfect image of life in the countryside. Writing in the nineteenth century, George Eliot, for one, criticized those representations of an innocent and guileless English rural life. Describing the hay harvest, for instance, she reflected:

> Observe a company of haymakers. When you see them at a distance, tossing up the forkfuls of hay in the golden light, while the waggon creeps slowly with its increasing burden over the meadow, and the bright green space which tells of work done gets larger and larger, you pronounce the scene "Smiling", and you think these companions in labour must be as bright and cheerful as the picture to which they give animation. Approach nearer, and you will certainly find that hay-making is a time for joking, especially if there are women among the labourers; but the coarse laugh that bursts out every now and then, and expresses the triumphant taunt is as far as possible from your conception of idyllic merriment. That delicious effervescence of the mind which we call fun, has no equivalent for the northern peasant, except tipsy revelry; the only realm of fancy and imagination for the English clown exists at the bottom of the third quart-pot. [18]

Feminist historians in the twentieth century went even further, by strongly arguing that the reality for women living in the countryside was anything but peaceful harmony. Yoking the "organic" community, so beloved by proponents of the rural idyll, to the similarly constructed but equally false domestic idyll, idealised as an "earthly paradise" but in reality

quite different, the two are identified as visually, albeit superficially, attractive, but as holding "ugly and exploitative" undercurrents, both hidden and ignored. [19]

In Wales, images of Welsh rural life as vividly fictionalised by early twentieth-century writer Caradoc Evans likewise cruelly demolished any preconceptions of a gentle harmonious countryside, and his short stories evocatively portrayed women's powerless and unhappy lives amidst the patriachal mysogeny of west Wales.[20] More recently, historians of nineteenth-century rural protest and crime in south-west Wales have contributed to dispelling the myth of a tranquil, acquiescent countryside idyll by exposing its turbulent and exploitative nature. Women are portrayed as championing causes, rioting, labouring, and pilfering; they are both sinners and sinned against. Yet another study points to the considerable hypocrisy of late Victorian and Edwardian Carmarthenshire, not least directed towards women, that underpinned the outward displays of strict piety and rigorous chapel-going that have hitherto so forcefully represented the Victorian experience in Wales. [21]

These fascinating, multi-faceted, fragmented and contrasting images of Welsh rural women require further examination. They feature in the above accounts within a variety of guises. Content, passive and happy on the one hand, subject to male dominance, even cruelty and moralising sanctity on the other, yet in other ways championed and protected, resourceful and worldly; from these descriptions it is only possible to conjecture as to what was the real nature of their lives in rural Wales.

It cannot be claimed that special factors pertained to south-west Wales as distinct from other regions of the Principality which would have peculiarly affected and shaped the lives of women, save perhaps for the presence there of the "bound tenant" type of agricultural labourer. It was decided to choose this peninsula as an area for investigation for a number of reasons. First, the expanse of countryside comprising the three counties of Cardiganshire, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire, with the exception of the northern part of

Cardiganshire, formed a natural geographical area. This western peninsula, David Williams observed in 1955, "has an individuality of its own. Rivers running to the west and south, which, with their innumerable tributaries, are its main characteristic, bind it together irrespective of county boundaries."[22]

It also had an economic unity. Although industrial development in the way of coal mining, copper smelting and later, tin manufacture, would occur in and around Llanelli in south-east Carmarthenshire from the close of the eighteenth century, to which centre many from within the region would find their way in search of a better standard of life, the region's economic mainstay throughout the nineteenth century was to be its farming. Under the constraints of physical and climatic factors the farming of the region was perforce dependent upon the raising of store livestock for export to richer fattening pastures of the English Midlands and south-eastern counties and the ancillary activities of butter and cheese manufacture. The inability of most of the region's grassland to fatten animals meant that, even after the coming of the railway from mid-century, production of store stock continued as the main type of farming pursued. Only with the advent of the motor lorry and the instituting of the milk marketing board in 1933 were farmers of the area able to leave this traditional system of store stock raising and butter and cheese manufacture in favour of greater dairying emphasis for the production of liquid milk. Farming throughout the region was done on a semi-subsistent basis by tenant farmers, who rented their small farms from gentry and aristocratic families, and by a quite numerous class of small occupying-owners; in a very real sense there was little to distinguish this prevalent group of small farmers, working their farms mainly with the help of family labour and by dint of cooperation with neighbours, from the labouring class.

In his rich study of the Rebecca Riots which occurred mainly in this south-western peninsula, David Jones drew attention to the fact that in the early nineteenth century "eighty

per cent of the region's population lived in comunities with fewer than 1,500 people"; the smallest towns were barely distinguishable from villages.[23] If the towns of the region, including the more sizeable ones, were generally unremarkable, they were nevertheless vital local market and service centres, drawing together for business and relaxation many of the people living in outlying villages and remote farmsteads and cottages. Most sizeable within the region at the time were Carmarthen, with its population reaching a peak of 9,526 in the 1831 census, Llanelli, with almost 7,000 by 1841, and Pembroke, Haverfordwest and Aberystwyth, in 1841 numbering in each case between 5,000 and 7,000 inhabitants. Lesser centres, with just half as many townspeople, included Cardigan, Milford and Tenby, while much smaller still were those many dwarf-size towns like Llandovery, Fishguard, Llandeilo, Kidwelly, Aberaeron, and Llangadog.[24]

The region's underlying geographical and economic unity was not the only justification for my choice of location. The area was also served by informative newspapers with the launch of *The Carmarthen Journal* in 1810 and, later, in 1832, *The Welshman*, newspapers that would report events and developments taking place throughout the three counties. The aforementioned Rebecca Riots of 1842-43 furthermore drew the attention of various commentators, who left detailed observations on the social condition of the region that afford a valuable source for the historian. It is my view, too, that the social historian is at a big advantage in knowing well his or her geographical area of study, an advantage I enjoy through my living on the eastern periphery of the region in Gower.

The present study is an attempt to undertake a broadly-based study of women in this largely rural region of south-west Wales; it will review many of the strands of women's experiences which have already been explored and also introduce some of the more neglected aspects of their lives. While it will not be possible to visit every avenue, my aim is to cover, in thematic chapters, a wide base of topics relating to the realities of their lives and, at the

same time, to examine their position within rural society. The late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries marked a period of profound change in Wales, when rapid industrial expansion saw the massive growth of iron, steel, copper and tinplate manufacture and coal extraction. Although centred largely in the south-east, the development, allied with enclosure, improvements in transport and communications, and legislative change, considerably affected life in rural Wales. As in Britain as a whole, agriculture lost its traditional predominant position within the economy and as the nineteenth century progressed rural Wales became increasingly a mere annexe of industrial Wales.[25] Not only were profound economic shifts occurring which would impact upon the lives of rural dwellers, men and women alike; rural society also underwent change in its socio-cultural make-up, notably in its religious affiliation. The growth and popularity of non-conformity, accelerating from the late eighteenth century, had profound repercussions not only for religious observance, but also for the social habits of much of the population. My aim is to investigate the degree to which these processes of modernisation affected women's lives, to determine how they adapted to altering circumstances and to explore their own ability to instigate change. By focusing specifically on women, it is hoped that new insights into the structures and forces operating in the countryside will be gained which will add to our understanding of Welsh rural life in the period under review.

Although mindful of the current mainstream feminist history debates, I chose to leave my fields of enquiry open-ended in order to make as comprehensive a survey as possible. In adopting this approach, my research has been spread over a wide area to cover a large variety of sources. It will soon become apparent that much of my evidence is drawn from parliamentary papers, government reports, newspapers, legal and court documents, inquests, and landed estate papers. As suspected, in all the sources consulted little evidence was forthcoming from women themselves. Diaries, journals and autobiographies written by

women were, unsurprisingly, sparse in number. Those few that were unearthed, middle-class in origin, although avoiding self-reference and innermost thoughts, did nevertheless indicate what pre-occupied the writers in their daily routine and allowed glimpses into their everyday concerns and interests. One or two were of exceptional value.

Fragmentary, fleeting glimpses of females were gained from tour books and written reminiscences of visitors, both male and female, to the Principality, while the childhood memories recorded in male autobiographies often gave incisive, if sentimental, descriptions of living conditions and personalities. The local histories of various hamlets and townships similarly yielded valuable facts and insights not available in the more generalized coverages. For all their shortcomings as an objective source, of especial use were the numerous government Royal Commissions relating to Wales and women's work, although proportionally few female voices were heard giving evidence. Traditional folk proverbs and colloquial sayings were useful for shedding light on gender relationships, especially with regard to moralistic judgements on perceived female character traits and to highlighting anxieties over areas of potential conflict. Particularly numerous, in this respect, were references to wives. While most women remained invisible, a small minority were spotlighted through the processes of the law. Very helpful here, were female witness statements or depositions contained in legal documents. Written from their own words, frequently such accounts offered illuminating insights into their lives and the community mores within which they operated. Criminal proceedings at Assizes, Quarter and Petty Sessions thus proved useful, although it was imperative to keep in mind the caveat of not "mistaking the exceptional for the commonplace".[26] As mentioned, there was good newspaper coverage; reports of specific events, editorials and letters from correspondents provided key sources of information and valuable insights into contemporary perceptions.

The first part of the study is concerned with examining the material constraints which substantially determined much of women's existence.[27] As mentioned, the impact of an industrializing Wales profoundly affected their lives, not only with regard to their working experiences but also their domestic and marital situation. The discussion commences with a study of female employment and the concomitant difficulties encountered in unravelling the many complexities associated with their working lives. There follows a chapter on the roles of farmers' and labourers' wives within the boundaries of the family economy. Women's contribution to Wales' agricultural prosperity has, for centuries, been of vital importance and their continuing input to family farming has enormous implications for the Principality up to the present day. Just as farm wives were important to family farming, equally the efforts of labourers' wives were vital to the well-being of their own families. Living fraught and often parlous lives of hardship, most survived on the fringes of poverty. The final chapter in this section is devoted to looking at the ways women could avoid pauperism, how they coped when faced with destitition, what official and unofficial support was available and the realities of living on charity.

The second part of the thesis deals with the many other aspects of women's lives. Ranging across the whole domain of their private and public lives, the study explores topics including sexuality, marriage, gender relations, beliefs and culture, leisure pursuits, public life and politics. When writing this section, especially, it has been difficult to avoid the analytical tool of separate spheres as a mechanism for understanding much of their actions and experiences outside the worlds of work and subsistence. A gendered construct, whereby men dominated the public arena while women remained within the private world of domesticity defined by house and homestead, the concept emerges repeatedly thoughout many aspects of women's lives, limiting their choices and shaping their actions.[28] Moreover, as widening opportunities emerged, opening doors to knowledge and allowing greater access

for advancement outside the home, the public/private dichotomy can be seen becoming ever more visible as women failed to keep pace with their male counterparts in grasping many of these chances for personal improvement. Yet for rural women, exclusion from the world outside their own immediate surroundings was not absolute. Within certain prescribed public boundaries, women's presence was highly visible. Their capacity for nurture and caring, for instance, was exploited for the community good in a variety of situations, although even within these confines their scope for agency was limited.

In painting a broad picture of how women lived in nineteenth-century rural Wales, I am aware that, as a consequence, my treatment of some subject areas and issues is not as comprehensive or knowledgeable as I would perhaps have preferred. Mere lip service has been paid to some areas of their lives which is worthy of better treatment and deserving of far greater scrutiny. Spinsterhood and old age are only two of the categories which merit greater recognition and attention. Notwithstanding its drawbacks, the study will hopefully raise questions, help to open new areas for debate and add to existing argument on a range of issues pertaining to women and their past lives. In order to focus specifically on the female experience, I have largely omitted male members of the rural population except where their inclusion has been necessary. For a greater emphasis on the shaping and interaction of gender roles, both male and female, future studies would require a stronger masculine presence. Notions of masculinity need to be examined in addition to those of femininity, as does the extent of their fluidity and ability to change.[29] Attitudes regarding the suitability of dairying as an occupation for men, for instance, had enormous implications for farmwomen as did the commercialisation of milk production in the traditional dairy county of Carmarthenshire in the early decades of the twentieth century.[30] Attention also needs to be focused on examining the lives of similarly positioned females elsewhere in Wales to enable some degree of regional or county comparison. That women living in nineteenth-century

Anglesey and the counties bordering England participated in the rural workforce to a far lesser extent than females in the south-western counties, is one of a number of topics requiring greater explanation. This would meet the recommendation made recently by Pamela Sharpe for a localized and nuanced approach to the subject of women's work experience within English communities.[31] Further scope for comparative analysis and evaluation can be undertaken with reference to the research already carried out into rural women's lives in Scotland, Ireland and the regions of England.[32]

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[1] Deirdre Beddoe, "Towards a Welsh woman's history",, Llafur: the Journal of the Society for the Study of Welsh Labour History, 3,2 (1981), pp.32-38.

[2] Ibid., p.34.

[3] Deirde Beddoe, "Images of Welsh women in Wales", in Tony Curtis, (ed.), "*Wales: the imagined nation, studies in cultural and national identity essays in cultural and national identity*" (Bridgend, 1986), pp.227-38.

[4] Ibid., p.228.

[5] Beddoe, *Towards a Welsh women's history*, p.38.

[6] An excellent general overview on the historiography of women from the nineteenth century and a discussion of the recent debates within the discipline can be found in June Purvis, "From 'women worthies' to poststructuralism? Debate and controversy in women's history in Britain", in June Purvis, (ed.), *Women's History: Britain 1850-1945, an introduction* (London, 1995) pp.1-22.

[7] Deirdre Beddoe, *Discovering women's history: a practical manual* (London, 1983). Professor Beddoe's other publications include *Welsh Convict Women: a study of women transported from Wales to Australia, 1787-1852* (Barry, 1979); *Back to Home and Duty: women between the wars, 1918-1939* (London, 1989*); Out of the Shadows; a history of women in twentieth-century Wales* (Cardiff, 2000) and co-author with Leigh Verrill-Rhys of *Parachutes and Petticoats: Welsh women writing on the Second World War* (Dinas Powys, 1992).

[8] Angela V. John, (ed.), *Our mothers' land: chapters in Welsh women's history 1830-1939* (Cardiff, 1991); Jane Aaron et al, (eds.), *Our sisters' land: the changing identities of women in Wales* (Cardiff, 1994*);* Sandra Betts,(ed.), *Our daughters' land: past and present* (Cardiff, 1996).

[9] Deirdre Beddoe, "Munitionettes, maids and mams: women in Wales 1914-1939", in John, (ed.), *Our mothers' Land: chapters in Welsh women's history, 1830-1939*; Diana Bianchi, "The Creation of a Myth: The Welsh mam", *Radical Wales,* 17 (1988); Deirdre Beddoe, "Images of Welsh women in Wales", in Tony Curtis, (ed.), *Wales: the imagined nation, essays in cultural and national identity* (Bridgend, 1986).

[10] L. Bellamy, K.D.M. Snell and T. Williamson, "Women and Rural History", *Rural History* 5, 2 (1994), p.123.

[11] David Jenkins, *The agricultural community in south-west Wales at the turn of the twentieth century* (Cardiff, 1971).

[12] Trefor M. Owen, *Welsh folk customs* (Cardiff, 1959); id.,*The customs and traditions of Wales: a pocket guide* (Cardiff, 1991); S. Minwell Tibbot, " 'Sucan' and 'Llymru' in Wales", *Folk life*,12 (1974), 31-39; id.,"Knitting stockings in Wales - A domestic craft", *Folk life*, 16 (1978), pp. 61-73;

id.,"Laundering in the Welsh home", *Folk life*, 19 (1981), pp. 36-57; id., "Liberality and hospitality: food as communication in Wales", *Folk life*, 24 (1985-86) pp. 32-51; id., "Cheese-making in Glamorgan", *Folk life*, 34 (1995-96), 64-79.

[13] Davies, Russell, "'Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night'? Women and Suicide in Carmarthenshire, c.1860-1920", in John, *Our mothers' land;* Rosemary A.N. Jones, "Women, community and collective action: the 'Ceffyl Pren' tradition", in John, *Our mothers' land*; Rhiannon S. Williams, "The true 'Cymraes': images of women in women's nineteenth-century Welsh periodicals", in John, *Our mothers' land*; Sydna Ann Williams, "Women's employment in nineteenth-century Anglesey", *Llafur*, 6, 2 (1993); L.J.Williams and Dot Jones, "Women at work in nineteenth century Wales", *Llafur*, 3, 3 (1982); Dot Jones, "Serfdom and slavery: women's work in Wales, 1890-1930", in Deian Hopkin and Gregory S. Kealey, (eds.), *Class, Community and the Labour Movement* (Newtown, 1989).

[14] David A. Pretty, "Women and Trade Unionism in Welsh Rural Society, 1889-1950", *Llafur*, 5,3 (1990); Audrey Philpin, "Women and crime in nineteenth-century Pembrokeshire" (unpublished M.Phil. thesis, University of Wales, 1991) ; Jill Barber, " 'Stolen Goods': the sexual harassment of female servants in west Wales", *Rural History*, 4, 2 (1993); Grace Hagen, "Women and poverty in South West Wales, 1834-1914", *Llafur*, 7, 3 & 4 (1998-1999).

[15] See the introduction in Howard Newby, *Green and pleasant land; social change in rural England* (London, 1979); also Karen Sayer, *Women of the fields: representations of rural women in the nineteenth-century* (Manchester,1995), pp.15-32.

[16] Revd. John Evans, *Letters Written During a Tour Through South Wales in the year 1803* (London: 1804), p.349; for examples where Welsh songs and poetry perpetuate the myth of the rural idyll in descriptions of a tranquil Welsh countryside with its picturesque cottages see Russell Davies, *Secret Sins: sex, violence and society in Carmarthenshire, 1870-1920* (Cardiff, 1996), p.61.

[17] N.L.W. MS.19758A: Sophia Ward, *A Tour Through South Wales, the Western and Southern Counties of England* (1797), p.19.

[18] George Eliot, "English Peasants", *Westminster Review* (New Series, XI, July 1856), pp.53-54, cited in Pamela Horn, *Life and labour in Rural England 1760-1850* (Basingstoke, 1987), pp.23-24.

[19] Leonore Davidoff, Jean L'Esperance and Howard Newby, "Landscape with Figures", in Julie Mitchell and Ann Oakley, (eds.), *The Rights and Wrongs of Women* (Middlesex, 1976), pp.139-175.

[20] See, for instance, the treatment of women in Caradoc Evans, *My People, stories of the peasantry of West Wales* (London, 1919).

[21] David Williams, *The Rebecca Riots: a study in agrarian discontent* (Cardiff, 1955); David J.V. Jones, *Rebecca's Children: a study of rural society, crime and protest* (Oxford, 1989); David J.V. Jones, *Crime in nineteenth- century Wales* (Cardiff, 1992); Davies, *Secret Sins.*

[22] Williams, *The Rebecca Riots*, pp.1-3.

[23] Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, p.24.

[24] Ibid., pp.24-5.

[25] E.J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire* (Pelican Books, 1969), p.297.

[26] E. Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen. The modernization of rural France, 1870 – 1914* (Stanford, 1977) p.51, quoted in Alan Armstrong, *Farmworkers, A social and Economic History, 1770-1980* (London, 1988), p.71.

[27] The importance of material constraints in determining the course of women's lives has been forcefully argued by Olwen Hufton, *The prospect before her: a history of women in Western Europe, 1500-1800* (London, 1995), p.5.

[28] Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850* (London, 1987). For a discussion of separate spheres as it came to be disseminated in Wales over a wide cross-section of Welsh society, see Rosemary Jones, "'Separate Spheres'?: Women, Language and Respectability in Victorian Wales", in Geraint H. Jenkins, (ed.), *The Welsh Language and its Social Domains 1801-1911* (Cardiff, 2000), pp. 177-213, esp. pp. 179-181.

[29] Gender as a category for analysis of women's history has been an issue of some debate amongst feminist historians. Exploration of gender relations has been undertaken in a variety of subject areas, however, see Robert Shoemaker and Mary Vincent,(eds.), *Gender and history in western Europe* (New York, 1998).

[30] Deborah Valenze, "The art of women and the business of men: women's work and the dairy industry, c1740-1840", *Past and Present,* 130 (1991). The increasing commercialisation in some areas of the dairy industry from the eighteenth century had important implications for women who saw their pre-eminence in this section of agricultural production diminish to be overtaken by male managers.

[31] Pamela Sharpe, "The female labour market in English agriculture during the Industrial Revolution: expansion or contraction?", *Agricultural History Review*, 47,11 (1999), p.181.

[32] This point is made in Michael Roberts and Simone Clark, (eds.), *Women and gender in early modern Wales* (Cardiff, 2000), p.3; publications on nineteen-century women's lives include Eleanor Gordon and Esther Breitenbach, (eds.), *The World is ill-divided, woman's work in Scotland in the nineteenth and early twentieth century* (Edinburgh, 1990); A Blaikie, *Illegitimacy, sex and society in north-east Scotland, 1750-1900* (Oxford, 1994); Esther Breitenbach and Eleanor Gordon, (eds.), *Out of Bounds, Women in Scottish Society 1800-1945* (Edinburgh, 1992); Jane Long, *Conversations in cold rooms: women, work and poverty in nineteenth-century Northumberland* (London, 1999); Maryann Gialanella Valiulis and Mary O'Dowd, (eds.), *Women and Irish history* (Dublin, 1997).

1

Female Employment

" Gwell mared gwr nog un gwraig"

Better does the ablest man

Than the ablest woman can. [1]

Using Census material

When researching employment in the nineteenth century, a good starting point might well be to access the statistics contained within the occupational material provided by the official Census. Collected at ten-yearly intervals from its inception in 1801, its data comprise a valuable source of information whereby historians have been able to reveal occupational groupings, ascertain trends for occupational change, and make regional comparisons and other analyses. Before 1851, however, the figures suffer from unreliability and a lack of specific detail, which substantially diminishes their effectiveness. A crude attempt to headcount in 1801 was followed in 1811, and 1821, with censuses that classified families rather than individuals and occupations were broadly based into three general categories of agriculture, manufacture and handicrafts. While attempts to improve the subsequent censuses of 1831 and 1841 served only to create inconsistency of recording, it was only from 1851 onwards, when a degree of standardisation appeared, that census data commenced their use as a research tool.

In respect to women's work in particular, the censuses' validity throughout the whole period of the nineteenth century has been questioned. Formulated, directed and administered by men, it has proved inadequate when accounting for the diverse nature and many complexities which characterize much of women's working lives.[2] By concentrating on what was thought of as economically productive work for instance, enumerators totally ignored women's unpaid domestic work and even when some attempt was made, between 1851 and

1871, to acknowledge the role of relatives within family-run businesses, certain occupational categories were omitted and the lack of guidance given caused confusion and a disparity of answers.[3] Moreover, when women were included in the returns, their involvement with seasonal, part-time and casual work, and the multi-faceted nature of their work, was not adequately shown up on a census that, to avoid distortions, recorded information pertaining to one night in early Spring. In addition, the prevalent attitudes towards women's work created even more invisibility for females, for, unlike men who were known by their occupational classification regardless of whether they were employed or not, this was not the case for women. Some indication of problems associated with the unrecorded nature of women's work can be illustrated by reference to the study undertaken by Sydna Ann Williams, wherein she points to their increasing invisibility when working for the parish of Beaumaris, in Anglesey, due to the changing methods of administration and documentation adopted by officials there in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Over time, not only were less details provided in the records, but it became more common for women to be paid in the names of their husbands rather than their own, a procedure she attributes to the increasing importance attached to the male head of the household. As gender roles were becoming more defined with the notion of separate spheres of influence, she argues, so women, in terms of their employability, were pushed further into the background. [4]

When such omissions were featured in a comprehensive survey such as the census, not only would the statistics on women's work be grossly disproportionate to the actual work they did, but could well affect the occupational categories they were allotted. By not recording and thus under-representing women's work, and especially those whose marital status restricted them to casual labour, the census can lay claim to having greatly diminished the role played by women in nineteenth-century working life. No wonder then that the numerous deficiencies

found in the data have led Bridget Hill to see their usefulness only in terms of acting as a "general guide to women's employment - that is their regular, full-time and paid employment".[5]

When briefly examining the 1851 census for statistics pertaining to women's work in south-west Wales, and bearing the above caveats in mind, it is nevertheless immediately evident that out of the twenty-two occupational categories given, only three, agriculture, domestic service and dressmaking, figured largely as major employers of women. In the counties of Cardigan and Carmarthen, agriculture was given as the predominant occupation, while in Pembrokeshire it ranked a close second to domestic service. In aggregate terms, it can be said that more women were employed in agriculture in south-west Wales at mid-century than in any other category of occupation: 12,564 as opposed to 9,244 in domestic service and 6,357 in dressmaking. In Wales as a whole, agriculture, holding 29.3 per cent of the female workforce, was the second largest employer of women and was substantially higher than comparable figures for women employed in agriculture in England, at 7.5 per cent. [6] Furthermore, it is quite likely that many of those women involved in domestic service would also have undertaken, as part of their duties, some of the tasks associated with the tending of animals or making produce such as butter or cheese. [7]

Female Farm Workers

Given the overwhelming importance of agriculture to the life and economy of the area, it is not surprising that for the greater part of the nineteenth century the most available form of paid employment for rural women in south-west Wales was farm work. Like so many other aspects of women's work, much of the casual, harvest and piecemeal elements of female agricultural labour, unfortunately, goes unrecorded and hence remains invisible from sight. While figures for female employment in agriculture would always have been at their highest during harvest time, a significant proportion of married and single women would nevertheless have been

engaged as day labourers throughout the year on some farms, undertaking general farm work. [8] On one large farm in Cardiganshire in the 1860s, for instance, fifteen local girls were employed throughout the year on this very basis. [9] The Nanteos estate's home farm employed ten full-time servants in 1781, comprising a bailiff, a waggoner, a ploughman, drivers, a ploughboy, a cowman and two dairymaids while another twenty-eight men and eleven women were employed as day labourers at various times of the year. [10] Their duties would have included such tasks as those undertaken by female labour on the Golden Grove estate in the 1770s and onwards, including helping with the herding and shearing of sheep, spinning, mending and assisting in brewing. [11] Very young girls and boys might have been employed in seasonal work such as pulling turnips, but this was said to occur only very infrequently. [12] Absent however, probably because of the small acreage comprising individual holdings in south-west Wales, were the private gangs of women and children so prevalent in parts of Northumberland and East Anglia. Only in Anglesey, on the home farm of Sir Richard Bulkeley and at various other farms in the neighbourhood of Beaumaris, was the system of gang employment seen to operate in Wales. [13]

For many rural youngsters in south-west Wales, opportunities for farm work, and with it the chance to progress up the employment ladder, would have initially commenced by way of service in husbandry, the strict, highly structured, age-specific and hierarchical mechanism whereby young people were recruited to a form of agricultural apprenticeship.[14] "Transient in nature, and ending usually upon marriage, it was an occupation for the young and single, who were, in turn, provided with a form of apprenticeship in agriculture and wages which could be saved for their future independence." [15] Unmarried young people left home to be contracted out on a yearly basis to a particular farm where they boarded and worked. [16]

Although similar in some aspects, perhaps, to domestic service, Ann Kussmaul succinctly distinguishes the difference between the two forms of employment. Rather than help

maintain a style of life as did domestic service, service in husbandry was a traditional method of ensuring a style of work, that is the household economy where it helped stabilise the labour force in the face of life-cycles and children. Constituting one of the distinctive features of farm employment in south-west Wales throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the arrangement favoured the essentially pastoral nature of Welsh farming with its reliance on continuous labour and where the largely subsistence economy induced farmers to pay in keep rather than cash. [17] Girls, generally the daughters of small farmers and labourers, and boys entered farm service as servants in husbandry, at a similar age, that is at twelve to thirteen years, the only exceptions being the eldest daughter who might well be retained at home to help with other children in the family.[18] In Cardiganshire, girls of ten were occasionally employed as childminders, but they did not actually commence farm service until they were older.[19]

Unless contracted privately, the recruitment of young people took place at the various hiring fairs held throughout the three counties usually during the autumn months of October and November. [20] *Hiring at St Clears took place on 12 October, Whitland's hiring fair fell on 14* October, Newcastle Emlyn's, 10 November, and so on.[21] There, boys and girls seeking positions would line up in files along a street, or against walls, to be inspected by farmers looking to engage strong healthy servants for the ensuing year. At its worst resembling a cattle market, towards the latter part of the nineteenth century when labour power was scarcer and prospective servants could afford to be more selective about work placements, there was a greater interaction and parity between the two parties which would have helped diminish the hiring fair's more servile and debasing characteristics.[22] Once an agreement was struck between servant and employer, the latter would hand over a shilling, called earns or earnest money, to seal the contract, which was then thought binding for the duration of the employment, with failure to fulfil the agreement considered tantamount to a breach of honour. [23]

When hired and within a day or so of the fair, a servant in husbandry would come to live with the farmer's family on a bed and board basis. Female servants normally slept in the farmhouses, while their male counterparts were allocated lofts over the stables. Sleeping arrangements did vary, however, according to circumstances, for it was not unknown for both males and females to sleep in the same room in a small farmhouse, or even together in a loft, ostensibly being separated by moveable partitions, both situations that helped give rise to the many accusations of immorality amongst Welsh farm servants and females in particular. [24]

Female farm servants were expected to undertake a variety of work, ranging from indoor duties, which included the preparation of food and helping in the dairy, to tasks out-of-doors, both in the farmyard, tending the animals, and in the fields. In Cardiganshire, some girls were hired specifically as agricultural labourers, to work solely outdoors, but even those employed as domestic servants on farms were expected to undertake a certain amount of agricultural work.[25] Their duties depended on the types of agriculture practised on the farm at which they were employed. On dairy farms, for instance, besides the usual domestic chores, they were expected to help the dairy maid and look after the cows, pigs and calves, while, on arable farms, they were employed in setting potatoes, hoeing turnips and assisting in the harvest work. [26] However, just as the nature of farming in Wales was generally mixed, albeit the emphasis in the south-west was towards the pastoral, so were the duties of female servants varied, especially on the smaller farms.[27] On larger farms, where more than one female servant was employed, tasks were apportioned out by rank and seniority. The general duties assigned the younger and inexperienced servants, sometimes known as "barn floor" girls, did not give way to more specialist roles until they were considered competent enough to fulfil them, usually after the duration of some years of watching and assisting an older fellow servant or the farmer's wife.[28] The responsible position of dairymaid, for instance, was generally filled by

girls aged twenty years and over who had assisted in dairy work for some years.[29] The chief servant, or head girl, was generally exempt from working in the fields, except at harvest time. [30]

Although female workers, as well as males, undertook hard physical labour, there appeared significant differences between the two in their specific duties, although this might not seem apparent judging by certain accounts written at the end of the eighteenth century. One observer, for instance, indicates in 1791, that there was little gender differentiation, even in those normally ascribed either male or female: "As for the difference of sex, it would hardly be perceived if it was not for the criterion of breeches, for labour seems equally divided between men and women, and it's as common to meet a female driving the plough as it is to see taffy seated at the milk pail".[31] For his part, Lipscomb, in 1799, tells of women in south Wales sharing "the most arduous exertions and business of husbandry . . they are commonly seen either driving the horses affixed to the plough or leading those which drew the harrow". [32]

However, the evidence on the whole points to clear cut gender differentiation of work tasks. An account in 1796 records that it was men who held the plough, although a girl might ride if a horse was used instead of oxen, and, while girls might ride a horse dragging a sledge, the driving of carts and waines was the responsibility of men.[33] Later, in mid-nineteenth-century Cardiganshire, while female farm servants were said to perform a large portion of the outdoor work of every farm, including tending cattle, cleaning stables, loading dung, planting and digging potatoes, taking up, topping and tailing turnips and driving the harrow, they were exempt from ploughing and were not trusted with horses and carts on the highroad.[34] Similarly, in Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire all the farm work was shared, except duties connected with the management of horses, like ploughing and carting, such occupations, along with spading, being considered too heavy and laborious for females.[35] In the hierarchy of agricultural occupations, caring for and working the horses on a holding was afforded the highest status, and was significantly adjudged a male preserve. Conversely, the dairy was

considered exclusively a woman's domain. The reluctance of male servants to undertake any tasks associated with dairying reveals much about perceptions of gender. Having to do the milking, for instance, was considered so "humiliating and unmanly" a task, that although they would have been taught the skill as boys, all such knowledge would be conveniently forgotten from the ages of sixteen and seventeen when they aspired to work with the horses. [36]

It is difficult to reach safe conclusions about the levels of wages received by farm workers, male and female, in the Welsh countryside in the period under review. As a general trend, however, wages in Wales dropped after the Napoleonic wars only to rise slowly up to the mid century, after which, notwithstanding slumps, there was an accelerated increase in wage rates.[37] What wages servants in husbandry might receive fluctuated; rates depended not only upon demand for servants, which was based on the profitability of agriculture at a given time, but what employment opportunities existed elsewhere. At the Carmarthen hiring fair of November 1850, for instance, wages were on the decline and the low demand for staff was said to be due to the "disastrous effects" of free trade badly affecting farmers' pockets.[38] A few years later, in 1854 and 1855, at the same fair, the rate of wages was high and many servants sought and found places, farmers now enjoying a revival in agricultural fortunes after the depression experienced between 1849 and 1853. A similar situation was reported for 1867, when most men and women servants gained satisfactory situations.[39] In so far as employment opportunities available outside of farm work were concerned, a major factor for change here was the coming of the railway in the third quarter of the century which facilitated out migration of many males and females from south-west Wales in the later decades of the century.[40]

While these general observations applied for the Welsh countryside as a whole, any attempt to discover precise earnings is thwarted by the methods of payment used and by local variations in the wage scales awarded. In addition to a cash wage, servants in husbandry were often given perquisites in the form of pasture for a sheep, wool to spin, potato ground or cart

loads of coal, although during the course of the nineteenth century this form of remuneration diminished in frequency to the extent that by the 1890s it had practically died out in some localities.[41] Even so, the Royal Commission into Wages and Earnings in Agriculture in 1919 was to point to this custom of part payment in kind as bedevilling attempts to come by levels of earnings of this class.[42] Long service was rewarded by additional payments in kind. After seven years at the same farm, a maidservant might receive a pair of blankets, for instance, while her male counterpart would become entitled, perhaps, to a heifer. [43]

Furthermore, as intimated above, wage scales fluctuated from parish to parish. In the years 1846 to 1847 in the Pembrokeshire villages of Crinow and Cronware, wages for females ranged from £3 to £7 a year, while male servants received from £4 to £12, the most sought after peaking at £16. Meanwhile, in the parish of Carew, wages for females were slightly lower, starting at 50s. and rising to £4, while men's ranged from £5 to £12. In Jeffreston the wage range extended from £3 to £5 for females and for males from £5 to £8, while, in the parish of Ludchurch, female wages ranged from £2 to £4, with males receiving from 30s. to £10, some rising to £12.[44]

Like the designation of responsibility, the level of pay awarded depended on an individual servant's experience and age. Always, however, as will be apparent from the foregoing paragraph, female servants were paid at a proportionally lower rate than their male counterparts. Throughout Europe, agricultural work was, by tradition, "poorly rewarded" with the payment of low wages and this circumstance had considerable more relevance for women, who were paid substantially less than men. In a scale consisting of three levels, it has been said that while men's pay was considered at an intermediate level, women's remained consistently low. [45] The lower status ascribed women which related to the tasks they were assigned, was reflected in their earning capacity. In Cardiganshire at the turn of the nineteenth century, while the wages of the men servants ranged from 25s. to £6 and £7, women's ranged from 15s. to £3

10s., approximately a half of the men's earnings.[46] An example of the wage differential between male and female servants on a particular farm can be seen from examining an account book belonging to a holding situated in the Vale of Towy in Carmarthenshire. The four male servants and three maidservants who were employed in the year 1874 received the following wages :

Male head servant:	£17 15s.0d., plus a sheep's grass and haulage of a load of coal for the washerwoman (the sheep's grass was valued at £2 10s. to £3 and the haulage of a load of coal constituted the loan of a horse and cart to carry coal for the woman who washed and darned his clothes during the year's service)
Second servant:	£12 plus haulage of a load of coal for the washerwoman
Two lads:	£3 10s.0d. each
First maid:	£8 plus two pounds (weight) of wool for making stockings
Second maid:	£7 10s.0d. plus two pounds (weight) of wool for making stockings
Y Forwyn fach (the little maid)	£3 0s.0d. [47]

Although we unfortunately have no way of knowing the ages or any other personal details of the servants, and while the awarding of perquisites renders accurate calculations difficult, we can nevertheless deduce that the men and boys received substantially more in remuneration in comparison with females and that differences in pay scale widened hierarchically. In the late 1860s, experienced dairymaids did not earn more than £10 a year, while the most senior male farm servant would have expected to earn a wage far exceeding that amount.[48] The numerous examples where women's pay is significantly lower in comparison to

men's point without doubt to the disadvantaged position female servants endured throughout these years. Indeed, that would be the case until well into the second half of the next century at least.

For labourers working on a daily rate, a similar situation existed. Compared to men's daily rates, those of women lagged significantly behind. In the late 1860s, during the summer, women were paid a usual rate of 8d. a day for ordinary outdoor work, although in some parishes this rose to 10d. When food was given, a reduced pay of between 4d. to 6d. was awarded, that is, depending on whether they worked eight or 10 hours. Girls of 13 and 14 years of age received a daily rate of between 4d. and 6d., for which they worked between eight to nine hours, stretching to 10 hours at times.[49] The urgency for labour at harvest-time, however, saw rates for working increase to 1s. with food and 1s.2d. without. Further east, where wage scales were higher due to competing industry, this rose to 1s.6d. [50] Bonuses given at some farms might include extra food or, in some cases, candles for the female harvesters and a pennyworth of tobacco for the men. [51]

The impact of the industrial revolution on women's agricultural work has been a subject of considerable interest amongst historians concerned with the extent to which it transformed rural employment opportunities and the bearing it had on both the level of women's participation rates and the nature of their work.[52] Faced with the dearth of accurate quantitative evidence, it is beyond the scope of this study to contribute significantly to this debate, but explanations are needed to explain trends which are evident in the statistics available for the later period after 1851. Although agriculture continued to contribute substantially, albeit to a lessening degree, to the economy of south-west Wales, by the late 1860s, as in the rest of Wales and England, an appreciable decrease was clearly visible in its workforce. To a certain extent the decline, involving both men and women, reflected agriculture's own reduced role, but it was the female agricultural wage-earner sector which saw the greatest drop in numbers. Census

returns for 1851 and 1871 show that female indoor servants fell by nearly as much as 20,000, from 26,000 to just over 6,000, and outdoor labourers from 1,268 to 1,000. In Cardiganshire, it was said that the employment of women had been reduced in the 25 years leading up to the late 1860s by a half to what it had been previously. [53]

Explanations for the reduction of women's participation rates at harvest time could be explained by changes in harvest technology. Used to explain seasonal withdrawals of women's labour from the corn fields of eastern England from the late eighteenth century, it has been argued that their role in the harvest was diminishing by the general adoption of the more efficient, but heavier, scythe instead of the sickle.[54] Thought to be physically stronger, men were tasked with the cutting of the corn while women were, instead, employed as "binders", following behind to tie or bind the fallen swathes, work that has been estimated as taking only three quarters of the time needed for cutting.[55] Whilst women in the Principality would have been similarly affected by developments in technology, the adoption of which, it has been argued, occurred at different times depending on locality, the mixed nature of Welsh farming, with its tendency towards pastoral land usage, negates its importance in explaining lowering female participation.[56] In addition, there is evidence that, as late as the 1860s in north Cardiganshire at least, women reapers were still hired at harvest-time.[57] This consideration apart, the fact that women were withdrawing from *all* aspects of paid agricultural work from mid-century requires further explanation.

Certainly there existed amongst middle-class opinion an aversion to the employment of women in fieldwork. The views of one reverend gentleman in Cardiganshire, who believed that it was "economically false and morally wrong" to employ women in agricultural work, faithfully echoed what concerned many other middle-class reformers, that females were in danger of losing their "character" by being outdoors and mixing with male company and were thus failing to conform to increasingly powerful notions of what constituted femininity.[58]

Views amongst commentators in Wales, nevertheless, were mixed. The isolated, poverty-stricken western counties of Wales were slow to adopt prevailing attitudes regarding the unseemliness of certain types of labour for women and there were some who continued to believe that a woman's outdoor agricultural labour was financially advantageous, both for her employer, the farmer, and her own family. As efficient as men in their work, they were also cheaper to pay. [59] (Specific concerns regarding married women's employment outside the home is further discussed in the chapter on domestic economy). Although fieldwork was condemned in many quarters as an occupation for women, dairying was considered acceptable work, despite its arduous nature, probably because, as has been suggested, the dairy was located within or adjacent to the farmhouse.[60] Unlike the mining industry, where laws were passed restricting the employment of women, no such legislation was thought necessary in agriculture for it was anticipated that the declining numbers of females engaged in this area of work was expected to continue. In Cardiganshire, for instance, "due to the interests and feelings of the women themselves, allied with the growing influence of English customs", it was forecast, at least by one observer, that there would come a time, given as 50 years hence, when women no longer worked in agriculture.[61]

Other occupations

Any attempt to even generalise about women's employment with any accuracy is beset with difficulties for, as Angela John has argued, even categories normally used in conjunction with women's work, such as full - and part-time, rural and urban, indoor and outdoor, and so on, are inadequate to describe the multifarious nature of their activities and the blurring of boundaries that characterized much of their work.[62] Lack of employment opportunities and regular work drove women in south-west Wales, as elsewhere, to take up any tasks that were offered and under any terms. What work there was available, aside from agriculture, was narrow in scope,

physically strenuous, poorly paid and in character reflected greatly on women's prescribed roles within the home. For most women, their working role replicated their domestic life.

For young and single girls, if they chose not to enter farm service as servants in husbandry, employment opportunities were severely limited to a narrow range of career options which focused primarily within the domestic industry. While women retreated from agricultural employment, their numbers in domestic service continued to increase. It has been maintained that the types of occupation that were encouraged by parents for their daughters to follow were those traditionally done by females. Domestic service, whether involving agricultural work or not, was considered a suitable area of employment and a mainstay for rural girls, offering as it did, accommodation, food and a family environment. [63] A study of the rural labour force in south Cardiganshire through the 1851 census indicates that 30 per cent more women than men were classified as servants, whereas in agriculture they formed only one sixth of the total labour force.[64] The growing demand for domestic servants offered opportunities of work for young women who preferred service outside agriculture, encouraged perhaps by parents who sought better chances for their daughters. As Flora Thomson has written on rural Oxfordshire, mothers there were ambitious for their daughters and wanted more for them than to be a farmhouse servant from which position they were unlikely to progress. [65] The drift of girls into towns looking for work during the course of the nineteenth century, as Martine Segalen suggests, might well have occurred as a result of encouragement from their mothers who, having regularly attended market towns, had become familiar with a different type of life which could be attained. [66] In many cases links were forged between village families and those in nearby towns as young girls migrated there looking for work in domestic service. [67]

Some indication of the requirements needed of a domestic servant in a "quality" household in mid-nineteenth-century Wales can be ascertained from the lengthy correspondence to Mrs. Johnes of Dolaucothi mansion, Carmarthenshire, from her daughter

Elizabeth, the contents of which were devoted to discussions on finding suitable and reliable housemaids. Skills sought to a high premium included the ability to wash and iron clothes, cook good, if plain, fare and sew neatly, while the art of dress-making was especially prized by prospective employers. Personal qualities, meanwhile, required servants to be honest, discreet, respectable, of good temper and never impertinent and in good health. (Given the frequent cases of theft of their employers' property on the part of female servants, the requirement of honesty was an understandable priority). They were, in addition, to display a willingness to stay within the employer's house and not ask for time off except to worship. Of vital importance, and one that would be insisted upon by prospective employers, was a character reference. If any servant had ambitions to rise in the world of service, her cause would be greatly enhanced by the knowledge that she came highly recommended from a previous situation. [68]

The ability to speak English was an additional requirement insisted upon in some households and one that seriously hampered the chances of monoglot Welsh-speaking girls gaining employment. Even being of Welsh ethnicity could prove injurious to work prospects in some situations where there was a preference for English staff. One advertisement inserted in the *Cambrian* newspaper was thus unequivocal in its desire to appoint an English woman to its domestic staff, adding that, otherwise, a Welsh servant would serve as long as she spoke English. [69] It was quite usual in some quarters for Welsh servants to be appointed to lower positions within the household, whilst further up the domestic service hierarchy English servants were preferred.

At mid-century, wages fluctuated for domestic servants but appeared to range from £4 10s. to £7. An additional specification at the commencement of service was often an agreement that a servant should find her own tea and sugar, these items being considered too costly for an employer to supply. [70]

Besides agriculture and domestic service, women were afforded work within the woollen industry. Growing in importance from the eighteenth century in Wales, woollen manufacture continued, in the first half of the next century at least, to contribute to the earning power of substantial proportions of families and women in particular. [71] Primarily a cottage industry and catering to local needs and fairs, the appearance of the carding machine from the first decade of the nineteenth century, and later technological advances for preparing yarn in the form of spinning jennies, jacks and hand mules, meant that the woollen industry, in some locations, gradually moved out of the domestic sphere and transferred into small factory settings. Units became established in the valleys of north Cardiganshire and within the Teifi valley and its tributaries, and made the county a comparatively important textile manufacturing base.[72] Such a trend towards factory production saw a decline in this traditional cottage industry, for wool was bought up by dealers only to be sold at six or eight times the price to be manufactured elsewhere.[73] Until the adoption of the power loom in around 1860, however, weaving still continued primarily as a cottage industry.[74] Said to be as numerous as their male counterparts in west Wales, women weavers, such as those employed at the Leri Mills in the early 1840's, were employed as outworkers and paid at piece rates, the flannel produced being sold locally or at fairs. [75] Where small pockets of specialist manufacturing existed, as in the felt hat making industry, which until the 1840s was centred in the three Cardiganshire villages of Llangynfelyn, Blaenpennal and Llanwenog, one or two women might be employed in part of the processing procedure. In this particular case, they were engaged in the final processes of stitching and binding the hats. [76]

Allied to the woollen industry was knitting. Some indication of the sort of work that was undertaken by females in the Principality can be gleaned through the eyes of outsiders - arguably the best type of evidence concerning the distinctiveness of a particular locality. According to the many journals and guides written by visitors to Wales at the turn of the

nineteenth century, it appears that women's main occupation apart from agriculture was knitting, a task which took up a considerable proportion of both their time and energy. [77] Women and girls were described in a variety of roles and situations: going about their daily business, travelling to market with baskets deftly balanced on their heads, at home in their cottages or riding out astride, but all the while knitting, using skills born of long practice.[78] So adept were women at the art of knitting, that the Revd. John Evans maintained that they could knit a stocking in the time it took to roast a goose or boil a pot and more than one pair could be knitted in a day.[79] However, despite such industry, what remuneration was gained remained very little and the occupation could be only classified as a subsidiary employment. The same gentleman estimated that it was possible for a woman to produce four pairs of stockings in a week out of two pounds of wool and four ounces of oil, from which, after selling to a dealer, she could make 1s.6d., a meagre profit given the amount of effort involved. [80] Walter Davies, writing in 1814, estimated a knitter's profits by checking the price of stockings, calculating their weight and deducting how much the wool would have cost to buy:

> "one pair of these stockings weighs near half a pound, what at 10d. a pound is 5d. out of the 8d. for which they are sold in the market [that is Tregaron] - but the price has since advanced - . . we may fairly state the raw materials of each pair of stockings to be worth 5d. - hence the woman has only 3d. for carding, spinning and knitting a pair of these stockings or 1s. a week. Hence, the woman has to support herself in food, raiment, fuel and house rent for seven days upon this 1s., yet at some times in the year it will buy her only one gallon of wheat. Such is the employment and such the only means of subsistence within reach of the poorest sort of females all over this extensive tract. . .. [81]

Another industry which caught the eye of outside agencies, with regard to its female workforce, was coalmining. Pembrokeshire coal pits had been a traditional focus of employment for women living near the county's southern coal belt. In 1791, according to Mrs. Mary Morgan, a visitor to the region, there appeared almost as many women employed in the Pembrokeshire mines as men.[82] As part of a nationwide survey, Pembrokeshire coal pits became subject to a far more critical appraisal by government inspectors in the early 1840s intent on examining how far women's role in mining departed from what was deemed suitable as an occupation for females. From this enquiry's report produced in 1842, we learn that in the early 1840s in Pembrokeshire, the lack of other occupations for females in the area saw 42 women for every 100 males working in the pits, which comprised the highest adult female to male ratio workforce in the whole of Britain.[83] At the commencement of their working careers, young girls toiled at the surface, separating culm before, at the age of twelve, going underground. There, performing laborious and physically exhausting work, women toiled as bearers, carrying coal in baskets on their backs to the doors of the pits until the turn of the nineteenth century, when they graduated to operating the newly-installed windlasses. The latter comprised a no less strenuous activity, rejected by male workers for that very reason.[84] Although legislation enacted in 1842 in the wake of the aforementioned enquiry forbade females from working underground, and restricted their activities to the pit surface, women continued to be so employed. One elderly lady talking in the 1920s recalled that when she was employed at the Kilgetty mine (south Pembrokeshire) in the late nineteenth century, she would work underground if it was required, but when a mines' inspector visited, she stayed at home but was still paid. [85] There was obvious connivance here between employee and employer, which was itself a reflection of the need for women to find work within an economy offering few employment opportunities, and perhaps to supplement the meagre wages of their menfolk.

To a lesser extent, work was found in the other small extractive and manufacturing industries dispersed around south-west Wales, although, here, job openings were slight. In the lead mines of Cardiganshire, for instance, women were employed sifting and washing the ore, and at tin-plate works at Carmarthen, where men undertook the smelting, milling the plates and tinning, females were engaged in the less specialised tasks such as preparation and cleaning of the equipment. [86]

Industrial accidents give tragic testimony not only to the extent, but the dangerous nature of women's employment. To chose examples at random, in the autumn of 1855 alone, a 15-year-old female employee at the copper works at Llanelly completely crushed her hands in the rollers of a mill used to manufacture cement while mineworker Martha James slipped and fell to her death into the Whym pit of the Broadhaven Colliery in Pembrokeshire. [87] Of course, the dangerous tasks they performed were not confined to their gender, their male counterparts carrying out equally hazardous work.

Generally, women were used as extra labour to undertake the many incidental tasks needed in the countryside. There is little evidence of women working within the semi-skilled occupations subsidiary to agriculture, such as blacksmithing or woodworking; rather, much of what they were employed to undertake was of an unskilled, temporary, part-time and casual nature. On the Slebech (Pembrokeshire) and Nanteos (Cardiganshire) estates, for instance, women and children were employed at appropriate times to strip bark off trees for use in the tanning industry.[88] Likewise, it was women and children who were recommended for the work of rubbing moss off oak and beech trees when woodlands needed improvement.[89] Whenever shortages of labour occurred, as at harvest time when men were fully occupied, women would be recruited to help in a variety of situations. For example, a shortage of male labour in the summer of 1846 led to the employment of a number of women for loading oak poles onto vessels lying at Blackpool on the river Cleddau in Pembrokeshire. [90] Working casually, they

could expect little reward, for just as women received substantially less wages than their male counterparts in agriculture, the situation applied equally in other areas of employment. In 1776, the nineteen women amongst the seventy-four miners in the Begelly colliery in south Pembrokeshire were paid approximately a half of that given to the men, and at the Picton Castle collieries in 1777, women earned 4d. to men's 8d. a day.[91] Similarly, the rates of pay for oak bark stripping on the Hafod Estate, Cardiganshire, in 1857, was set on a sliding scale whereby women received 1s.6d. for a day's labour, a sum well below the 2s. paid to boys and significantly lower than that of the men who earned 3s.6d. [92]

Besides working for local landowners and farmers, women were employed throughout the period within their own parishes to undertake a variety of tasks that came under the umbrella of community work. Midwifes were held in considerable esteem and respect within their local communities, although their special expertise, and with it its attendant status and earnings, came to be diminished in the face of a developing male-dominated "professionalised medicine".[93] Late eighteenth-century diarist, William Thomas of Michaelston-Super-Ely, Glamorganshire, displays evidence of the repute and deference which midwives could expect, by making reference to various midwives in the most glowing terms, as, for instance, describing the seventy-year-old tailor's widow Ann John who was buried in February 1781, as "the greatest midwife in our parts".[94] Usually well respected in the neighbourhood, at death she could expect to receive especial praise for a long service, counted not only in years, but also in the number of births attended. Another midwife whose death, at 81, was reported in a Spring 1861 issue of the *Carmarthen Journal* was commended for having delivered 6,000 births in a career which spanned 40 years. Even in her eightieth year, she had apparently delivered 270 children! [95]

Providing a flexible system of community care, very often women, usually paupers themselves, were called upon and paid by parish officials out of the rates to board and lodge the parish homeless or care for the sick and infirm in what constituted an extension of their

domestic role.[96] Their versatility as community workers might extend beyond the sphere of domesticity however, to incorporate them within a range of other duties associated with parish responsibilities. In the parish of Carew in Pembrokeshire, for instance, in 1845 Mary Adams was contracted to wash the Church linen, along with strict instructions as to how she should go about such a responsible task, while three years later, in the same parish, a Mrs. Mary Allen was appointed sexton, gravedigger and bell-ringer by the Vestry. [97] At least up to the six years preceding 1783, and probably later, Elinor Williams was regularly employed by constables of the town of Llandovery in Carmarthenshire to convey, on horseback, vagrants to Llanspythid in Breconshire.[98] It is significant, however, that in times of high male unemployment, women were overlooked for employment in favour of men who were given preference for any available work. Mindful of who were the main breadwinners, at one vestry meeting in Mynachlog-ddu in north Pembrokeshire, on 25 November 1795, it was resolved that when roads needed mending, every surveyor "must take care that none is to send a child or a woman when is needful for a man to mend the highway upon his peril". [99]

Few women owned businesses, and not surprisingly, as the census returns indicate, they featured mostly in those trades which identified most strongly to their domestic roles, that is catering and food manufacture. In the south Cardiganshire village of Rhydlewis, the 1851 census indicates that while five of the seven millers were men, all eight bakers were women; there were two female meat-sellers as opposed to three male butchers and both men and women were classified as publicans.[100] In business, generally, men outnumbered women in substantial proportions. Amongst the principal inhabitants listed for the town of Carmarthen in the *Universal British Directory* for the five years dated 1793-1798, of the 43 traders mentioned, only 5, or 11.6 per cent, were women, occupationally a maltster, a tanner, two ironmongers and a mercer. [101] Whilst other evidence relating to the same period shows little correspondence with the above information when actually naming these women (the 1798 Land Tax Returns for

Carmarthen, for instance, record seven different women as being in business in the town trading as a shopkeeper, tobacconist, innkeeper, maltster, painter, grocer and cookshop proprietor), all sources, nevertheless, exhibit a similar low ratio of women trading under their own name compared to men. An examination of surviving business account ledgers held by the likes of prominent Carmarthen general merchant Morgan Lewis, for instance, reveals that out of the 79 individuals living in Carmarthen who held accounts with him over the period 1797 to 1807, only seven, or 8.95 per cent, were women and these included three bakers, the proprietess of the Swan public house, two shoemakers, a saddler and a tanner. [102]

Omitted from the above lists, however, are the numerous and often short-lived multi-faceted enterprises and services provided by would-be female entrepreneurs. Given the dearth of employment opportunities and low remuneration, women were driven to adopt a variety of small-scale strategies and devices designed to bring in small profits that, accrued to other income, would help to provide a wage on which to subsist. As one female beer-house keeper succintly explained, "*One must live by what one sells. I do not find that easy work.*"[103] By trading thus, they entered the realms of those whom John Benson has coined "penny capitalists". [104] Enterprises favoured by females involved boarding rooms for lodgers, keeping beer-houses, bartering and retailing, childminding or laundry work. Reports of Petty Sessions hearings give many instances of enterprising women applying for licences to keep lodging houses in order to accommodate the influx of workers and others who sought to rent a bed. [105] The inevitable financial constraints and lack of investment which hounded the majority of female-run enterprises ensured that most catered to the low ends of the social ladder. Unfortunately, perhaps, for the large majority of women who kept respectable lodging houses and who remain hidden from view, the most visible to the historian are those disreputable examples who feature in police record books as keeping "common lodging houses", and whose

premises were often the first ports of call for police investigations in times of robberies and disturbances.[106]

For most self-employed females, however, there was status to be derived from being self-sufficient, and within her selected enterprise a woman could enjoy prestige depending on the manner in which she operated. Washerwomen were, for instance, divided into two categories, the difference being between those who took in washing and who were afforded a higher status because they could manage at home, and those who went out to wash in the homes of others. [107]

Whatever could be gathered, picked and grown was turned into income. Along the coast local women collected shellfish from foreshores and estuaries to sell at fairs and markets in the neighbouring countryside and towns, often travelling many miles in order to do so. On the river Cleddau, in Pembrokeshire, the legendary fearsome women of Llangwm, petticoats tied around their legs in the manner of "Turkish trousers", dredged for oysters that they gathered in creels, while at Llanstephan on the river Towy in Carmarthenshire, the wives and daughters of fishermen walked out at low tide to scratch for cockles which they filled into sacks and loaded onto boats that, charging 2d. per person, took them to Carmarthen where they would sell them for up to 6d. a bushel.[108] Amongst those said to fish for shrimps at the seaside village of Borth in Cardiganshire were the wives and widows of local sailors. [109] Moreover, even if not gathering the produce themselves women would act as agents, either for fishermen or purchasers. Sewin from the River Teifi in Cardiganshire, thought too delicate a fish to be transported to markets in England, was sold to women from the vicinity of St. Dogmaels who would then take their purchases to Cardigan market for re-sale. [110] (The role of married women in the family's domestic economy is further discussed in the following chapter).

When it came to carrying out dealings in the market place or auction women were assertive and business-like. According to one visitor to Brecon market women were as adept

there at buying and selling as men and not infrequently sold and bought corn.[111] An account of the monthly sale of timber at the Pembroke dock yard reported that among the crowds packing the sale room at the appointed twelve-noon start were "not a few" females, who were described as being as commercial in their appearance and conduct as the most experienced businessman.[112]

Another outlet for women's entrepreneurial activity lay within the growing tourist industry and included the supervision of bathing machines assigned to female visitors staying at resorts along the coast. Among those awarded bathing machine licenses at a Commissioners' meeting in Aberystwyth in June 1856 were Elizabeth Lewis who was granted two, Elizabeth Hughes three and Mary Ann Richards two. [113] At Tenby, a resort called in 1788 "the summer retreat of the gentry in Wales" and noted in 1791 for its parties of English visitors and where sea bathing was especially popular, attendant Peggy Davies worked, during the summer months, for forty-two years until her death in 1809, aged eighty-two. She is fittingly remembered even today with an inscription honouring her memory prominently placed in the town. [114]

The few occupations open to women in south-west Wales hardly altered over the course of the nineteenth century. Those opportunities which did become available were in sectors traditionally employing female labour, for example, domestic service. The introduction of cheap cotton into the country, which widened the choice of clothes and allowed for higher fashion awareness, increased the demand for dress-makers, an occupation which attracted many females who sought alternative employment to the stalwarts of agriculture and domestic service.[115] Few, if any, women entered the professions, which remained exclusively male-orientated. It is perhaps not surprising that the late eighteenth-century *Universal British Directory*, quoted above, listed not one woman among the professional callings of the law, medicine and the Church, and this remained the case throughout the period examined. [116] For

genteel, middle-class females seeking an income, there was little to offer besides teaching. The growth of schools and the extension of education in both private and Church or government-led initiatives did open up certain opportunities for work, while a few enterprising females opened private boarding schools, such as the so-named Cambrian Seminary at Tenby which held a limited numbers of places for middle-class girls.[117] For others, chances of work came with the reform and development of services such as the postal system. The newly established Pendine post–office in 1855, appointed a Miss Rees, for instance, who was responsible for the delivery and dispatch of letters to and from the village as the post arrived every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from St. Clears. [118] While nineteenth-century attitudes in south-west Wales towards women's work remained rigidly focussed on the domestic front to the rejection of other avenues of opportunity, women's chances of gaining other work stayed commensurately low. It comes as no surprise, then, that an advertisement in a Cardiganshire newspaper asking for a number of respectable girls who could be taught how to type set in 1870 was met with scepticism and scorn. [119]

The Realities of Service

Contemporary opinion was divided on how harsh were the working conditions of servants in husbandry. Sent into service at an early age because of the poverty of their parents, these children of small farmers and labourers on all accounts had far better food and a more nutritious diet than they would have if they had stayed at home. [120] While admitting that farm service was laborious and hard, advocates of the system considered that the work was healthy, and, given that girls would have been doing similar work at home anyway, that they lived in what represented an improvement in terms of food, clothing and wages.[121] Others, however, believed that both the long hours of work and the conditions experienced by female servants on farms was shameful and anathema to the evangelical spirit of the times. Often regarded with

pity by a sympathetic Welsh non-conformist press, the arduous nature of female farm servants' work was equated with slavery, "caethiwed heb y cadwyni [slavery without chains]".[122] (The slavery motif was popularly used by contemporary voices to indicate a working life shackled by poverty and lack of opportunity. Women's work in other occupations was also viewed as equally demanding. Women working in the Pembrokeshire coalfields, for instance, were said to work "harder than the slaves in the West Indies").[123] Not only were farm servants considered to be hard working but once they entered into farm service it was thought their education ended and with it any hope of self-improvement. [124]

It could be argued that all these views on farm service held validity. Certainly the hours of work for live-in servants in husbandry, as similarly experienced by those in domestic service, were long and arduous and especially so for female servants who were expected to be the first to rise in the morning and the last to finish their work. Normally starting at five o'clock they rarely finished before nine at night.[125] Some indication of the exacting and arduous work assigned to dairymaids, for instance, can be gained from the late eighteenth-century journal of Anne Evans, who ran the dairy at the home farm of Highmead mansion in Cardiganshire:

> She [Jany, a dairy maid employed in June 1796 until Allhallowtide at £1 5s.] gets up before four o'clock in the morning. The first thing she does is to make the fire and skim a few pans of milk which she puts into the pan to heat and then skims all the milk, that is two milkings, and puts it together as soon as she can. That done she puts water in another brass pan to heat to wash the pans. When she has washed the pans she goes out to milk. She generally compasses the aforesaid work by 6 a.m. without assistance.. . . after milking. . . the dairymaid carries into the dairy the milk being put by. . Mallen goes to wash the pails and the dairymaid to whey the cheese. She gets the cheese under the

press by 8 o'clock, then turns all the cheese under the press and washes up her tubs and cheese cloths which she seldom finishes before 10 o'clock when she comes in for a breakfast . she gives whey to the pigs and meal to the fowls and sweeps out the pig court before breakfast. [126]

Tied to their service which allowed little time for leisure, farm accounts testify to the simple and frugal life of servant girls who were of humble needs and who experienced few treats. Spending just 15s.6d. over the course of 1858, maidservant, Sarah Evans, used her advance as follows: 3s. were donated towards her sister's wedding as a bidding contribution, 6d. was spent at Abertyfi, probably at a fair, 10s. went towards the purchase of a sheep, for which she would have had an arrangement to keep with her employers, while the remainder went to repair her shoes (6d.) and to pay a tailor for making a small gown and petticoat (1s.6d.).[127] Nor did this pattern change significantly over the course of the following sixty years judging by an account of one female servant's expenditure over the six-month period of May to November, as given to the 1919 Royal Commission on Wages and Conditions in Agriculture, although there were some striking additional expenses. Earning the sum of £6 over this time, the servant was left with a balance of £1 6s.7d. after spending 2s.6d. in connection with a singing festival, paying 3s. for a new petticoat at a bazaar, 7s. to go to Aberystwyth, the remainder going towards insurance (£1 0s.11d.) and for her teeth (£3).[128] Frustratingly, we are not told any more details, but it is clear that some savings could be accumulated over the long term.

There can be no doubt that many of the domestic servants serving the 'big houses' got caught up with the relative opulence of their surroundings and the glamour attached to the gentry and came to regard them with deference, loyalty and awe. According to the reminiscences of one old lady who spent a lifetime in service at the Stackpole estate in

Pembrokeshire and whose husband had been the head gamekeeper there, the "family" could do no wrong, and excused any misunderstandings with the explanation that because she was not of quality herself, some things were a little difficult to understand. [129] Just as Maria, a servant girl in Carmarthen, had discarded her customary bonnet for chapel on Sundays, choosing instead to improvise by fashioning a small hat on which she placed two ribbons in imitation of her mistress, many similar girls entering domestic service copied and improvised the habits, manners and dress sense of their mistresses.[130] In some cases, strong attachments could spring up between mistress and maidservant, such bonds transcending those even of family loyalties. At their insistence, the widow of the Rev. Thomas William Prytherch returned to her service with the Johnes' family at Dolaucothi, spending the following twenty years with them, after putting her young son out to be nursed. Even afterwards, when mother and son, now grown up, took on the tenancy of the local Dolaucothi Mill, Mrs. Johnes was reluctant to release her servant, despite the latter's advancing years. [131] Likewise, the occasional servant in husbandry might remain in the employment of one family for many years. Societies awarding annual premiums of between 2 guineas and 10s.6d. to worthy candidates for length of service and good housewifery identified females such as Elizabeth Owen, who had served both a father and his son during her 46 years of service in one place, and Mary Hughes who had served the Hon. Mrs. Lloyd and her family for 37 years. [132] As already observed, with little opportunity to spend their wages, over time such women would have been able to accrue substantial savings and a certain independence. It is doubtful, however, whether many could match the example of Elizabeth Llewelyn, who, having worked as a hired servant for 23 years for a farmer in the parish of Llandagadock in Carmarthenshire, had saved sufficient funds to purchase a cottage and garden and to build another. Displaying an entrepreneurial spirit that kindled the envy of many, she rented both out for the sum of £3 a year each, while, at the same time earning £2 interest per year on money she had put out on loan. [133]

It is difficult to determine how cordial were relationships between servants and their employers. The lower down the social scale, the greater the integration that existed between the two parties, although this appeared to be changing. Certainly down to mid-century both employer and servants ate and worked together in a close relationship. "Poet of Vanity" Richard Williams, in his "A new song illustrating the ways of the world at the Present Time and the difference which existed In Days of Yore", which he published in 1850, speaks however of the growing superiority in the status of farmers in relation to their servants which, in turn, created a social distancing which manifested itself in separate tables for eating, a different quality of food and drink and an aloofness when in such public events as a fair or market.[134] Similarly, the widening of relationships was to be seen in the increasing substitution after mid-century of the term "master" and "mistress" for the old ones mentioned of "uncle" and "aunt".[135] Having recognised a slow widening in the relationship, it was nevertheless the case that a 'social intimacy' between the classes existed in south-west Wales, as in certain other parts of the Principality, down to World War One, an intimacy "which would never be found in the richer farming districts of England".[136] Even on the occasional gentry estate it was not unknown for the servants, men and women, to dine at the same table and eat the same food as the family. [137]

This is just one side of the relationship between employers, their families and servants, however. For if close proximity at one level could create deep loyalties, protection and true friendship, so, too, on another level, could it heighten resentments and jealousies, causing friction and bitterness. In addition to the hard grind of daily drudgery were the stresses and strains encountered by living in the close confines of an employer's family. The claustrophobic conditions of living and working together, especially on a small family farm, often created unbearable pressures leading to misunderstandings, bullying and even violence. Domestic and

farm servants were among the most vulnerable group in south-west Wales, as elsewhere, to suffer mental and physical cruelty, and, as will be discussed later, sexual harassment. [138]

Quarrels involving other staff sometimes made the workplace a miserable place; one dispute between the cook and the nursemaid in the Rev. Harrison's house, for instance, saw the nursemaid going missing from a Friday to the following Tuesday, when she was found exhausted and starving in a closet of an adjoining house.[139] Worse still was abuse given to servants by their employers and their families and here, the evidence suggests, wives and daughters could be as equally vindictive as their male relatives. Servant in husbandry, Eleanor Rowe, fled without her belongings after only having worked six weeks, when her employer's daughter bullied her by pulling her hair and smothering her.[140] Two girls in farm service at Llandefailog, Carmarthenshire, complained bitterly of the treatment meted out on them by their employer's wife, whose husband, after one assault, not only applauded her actions but then chastised her for not going further and knocking the girls' brains out.[141] Perpetrators of such crimes were likely to go unpunished, as successful prosecutions were rare given that charges were difficult to prove. Rumours that the death of twelve-year-old servant, Ann Richards, from ill treatment she had received at the hands of the respectable farmer's wife at the farm in which she worked went unproven, the inquest on the child's body returning a verdict of "death by the visitation of God". [142] Of course, such abuse was not by any means confined to Welsh farms alone, but was endemic wherever inequalities of power existed. One woman who worked on a small Devon farm in the early nineteenth century was able, thirty years later, to display telltale marks from the ill treatment that had been meted out to her by her mistress. [143]

Problems with insufficient food, being forced to undertake tasks inappropriate to the agreements of service, bad relations with other servants, accusations of theft, sexual impropriety and abuse were all likely reasons for complaint by unhappy servants. Despite the increasing demand for female servants at mid-century, which, according to one employer,

resulted in her staff "becoming quite Mistresses and we are to wait their will and pleasure. .", the situation remained that, in the event of a grievance or dispute, a servant was heavily disadvantaged.[144] Advantaging an employer, of course, was the system whereby wages were paid at the year's end. Any hint of disaffection by a servant could mean a withholding of any entitlements and prevent a servant from obtaining her rightful remuneration in cash or perquisites. In this event she would have no option but to commence an upsetting and costly legal battle to recover what was owed her.[145] Should she leave her employment before the agreed date, a servant would forego her chance of acquiring a character reference and thus severely diminish her prospects of future work. Here a sharp distinction existed between domestic servants and those in husbandry, for the latter were governed by binding hiring obligations which, when pursued at law, could result in successful suits being brought against them for desertion. [146] Once hired, a servant in husbandry was expected to work the whole year as agreed. Legally binding, while employers were expected to apply to magistrates should they wish to dismiss a servant, any failure by a servant to complete a term of service without giving a valid reason could result in a court appearance to face charges.[147] Inevitably, considerable pressure existed for a servant in husbandry to remain at her place of work. Although for a servant to leave before the end of her year's contract was unfortunate for both parties, nevertheless, it was the servant who suffered the most on legal, financial and social grounds. [148]

If no valid reason was given for a departure from employment, a servant could be ordered back to service and made to relinquish a portion of her wages towards any costs accrued, but more often she would be discharged from service forfeiting any wages already earned. Thus eighteen-year-old Anne Edwards who had left her employment after having worked for seven months, from November 1866 to the following May, lost whatever was owing to her (in her case, the full seven months' wages) and was discharged from service. Her plea that she had left after having been accused of stealing and dismissed by her employer went

unheeded. [149] Others fared even worse, for, in serious cases, magistrates were at liberty to impose custodial sentences when it was felt appropriate. The bench took a dim view of Martha Jones and committed her to the house of correction for a month after hearing how she had left her service on New Year's Day returning briefly only to leave a week later. [150]

Migration

From the middle of the eighteenth century, lack of employment opportunities, poverty, and the demand for labour elsewhere, induced many Welsh migrants to leave their homes in search of work.[151] What had become an established pattern by this time, both men and women left the western counties of the Principality to find service in the more prosperous agricultural districts of south-east Wales and further afield.[152] Much of this migration however was temporary and seasonal in nature. Working away from home for periods of time not only freed up sustenance for other family members, but brought with it the welcome promise of added income in the future, thus providing what has been called a "prop to the domestic economy". [153]

Some seasonal employment was found within the counties of south-west Wales during the summer months. While agriculturally richer south Pembrokeshire offered opportunities for work for those living in the less fertile north of the county, similarly the dearth of employment in parts of southern Cardiganshire necessitated many girls temporarily migrating to the north of the county and into neighbouring Montgomeryshire, where, at harvest time, they would earn 1s. 6d. and their food.[154] One such female migrant worker, Ruth Jones, evocatively recalls travelling in the mid 1850s, along with other girls from Talgarreg and neighbouring villages in Cardiganshire, over the hills to Aberystwyth market, where they would stand with their sickles under their arms, hoping to find joint employment.[155] This was not an unreasonable expectation for, at harvest time, one landowner, farming 500 acres in North Cardiganshire, employed 15

female reapers who would board and lodge on his premises for the duration of their work.[156] Hired as temporary labour they could expect to be paid 1s.6d. and their food a day. [157]

Olwen Hufton, when looking at the subject of seasonal migration from a wider European perspective, uses Welsh examples to help support her argument that women, in particular the unmarried, were of the most mobile members of society. [158] In Wales, females from Tregaron and surrounding villages in Cardiganshire took advantage of the information brought back by cattle drovers who regularly drove store cattle to the fattening English counties of the Midlands and south-east, to follow suit in the search for seasonal work in the rapidly-expanding market gardening districts of London.[159] It is likely that migratory women would have, like Jane Evans (who journeyed to join Florence Nightingale's nurses in the Crimea, and whose plaque rests in the chapel at Pumpsaint), travelled with drovers, or followed their routes towards their chosen destinations.[160] Leaving on foot in mid-April to undertake the two-hundred mile, seven-day journey and returning in September, numbers would have included the daughters of farmers whose small holdings could barely support a whole family, and domestic and day labourers and married women. Lodgings during the journey were paid for by the sale of stockings which were knitted as the women travelled. [161]

When reaching their destination, the "Merched y Gerddi" [The Garden Girls] as they are famously called, found work undertaking tasks necessary for successful market gardening. Planting, hoeing, weeding, lifting, picking and sorting the various soft fruits and vegetables, were everyday chores. In addition, the produce was washed and carried to market, the latter a backbreaking and arduous task said to cause many women to collapse with exhaustion. Although few opportunities existed for leisure time and living accommodation was rudimentary, the rewards for the long and strenuous hours of toil amounted to wages far in excess of anything they could have expected at home. It has been estimated that amounts of

between £8 and £12 could be earned in the five months labouring there, a considerable sum in comparison with what would be earned as wages in Wales. [162]

Although seasonal migration to London appeared to cease for Welsh girls by the middle of the nineteenth century, not least because of the contraction of employment opportunities there, the capital remained a favourite venue for work, attracting females from all over Wales. Females from the Principality and Ireland had, for instance, long dominated the city's milk trade, and this continued at least up until the middle of the nineteenth century. Up before dawn and out regardless of weather conditions, a milkmaid's typical day in the 1840s might commence at 2a.m., with a journey out of London to the suburbs where the pastured cows would be milked. Often tired to the point that they would fall off their milking stools, the girls would be supervised by a bullying and unsympathetic foreman directed to ensuring that they worked. On returning with the fresh milk to the capital by 6a.m., the milkmaids would then hawk their produce around the streets on shoulder yokes, selling to their regular customers, after which the empty milk pails and jugs would be scrubbed and returned ready for the repeat performance.[163] Long lost from view, rare glimpses of these Welsh milk girls can be caught through their being spotlighted in the Welsh press, albeit only the more unsavoury aspects of their experience are to be gleaned from this source. The *Cambrian* newspaper in early January 1805 refers, for instance, to a fight taking place between two Welsh milk maids over the degree that milk should be adulterated, with one adhering to the general custom of adding five threads or pints of water to a gallon of milk, while the other adding only three pints. The quarrel, commencing in the cow keepers' yard in St Pancras, was later resumed in the streets, where, insults flying and milk spilling everywhere, the two fought out their differences.[164] The two girls' participation in the adulteration of milk is hardly surprising, of course, given that the practice was widely adopted by London milk vendors.

By dint of geography and opportunity, migration tended to take place in an eastwardly direction and, at least initially, within short distances. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the willingness of the young to migrate from the rural areas of Wales accounted for an equalling of the work opportunities to labour supplies in these districts. While a small proportion from the rural counties emigrated to the United States and Canada, the greater majority of rural migrants settled in areas within Wales itself.[165] For young males, the great attraction was the industrial region around Llanelli and, further afield, of south-east Wales. As far as young unmarried females were concerned, many before the 1870s from Carmarthenshire were said to look no further than Cardiff and Newport to settle.[166] Interestingly, during the same period those girls from Monmouthshire who decided to leave Wales behind and settle in Cheltenham, were later to travel to London as their final destination. [167] It is unsafe, however, to reach too hard and fast conclusions about the destinations of those leaving the Welsh rural districts; thus, while females from rural Wales, including Cardiganshire, we have seen, were to work in considerable numbers from the early nineteenth century onwards in the London dairies, many others from Cardiganshire were employed on farms in the eastern counties of Wales as farm servants. Highly prized for their willingness to undertake a variety of outdoor work such as milking and muck spreading, their attitude was said to contrast markedly to girls living in the eastern parts of Wales, who by the middle of the nineteenth century had come to reject outdoor work. Farmers living in the hilly western parts of Radnorshire were keen to employ young sixteen-year-old Cardiganshire girls who went there looking for work, although within two years of being so employed, the girls quickly adopted the attitudes of the local females in desiring indoor appointments only. [168]

It was domestic service, above all, that came to dominate the employment market for migrating females and heavy demand for servants increased the recruitment of Welsh girls into the English domestic service market. Edward Higgs, when analysing the servant population of

Rochdale in Lancashire, observes that the "tendency was for the servant population to become more migrant over time, with a disproportionate increase in the number of women from English counties south of Lancashire and from Wales. These areas provided 21 per cent of all servants in 1851, but 44 per cent in 1871.[169] Meanwhile the shortage of domestic servants in London was said to absorb ever more numbers of "strapping young wenches" from Wales, many of whom were recruited by English families visiting the spas and tourist attractions in the country. Highly prized for their "industry, honesty and cleanliness, thought partly due to their religious training in many cases, or an upbringing on a smallholding, where an early taste for work was acquired", the girls found themselves in great demand and were quick to induce others to follow their example. [170]

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[1] Henry Halford Vaughan, *Welsh Proverbs with English Translations,* A Facsimile Reprint (Felinfach, 1993, first published London, 1889), no.1317, 189.

[2] See Edward Higgs, "Women, occupations and work in the nineteenth-century Census", *History Workshop Journal*, 23 (1987), pp.59-79; Bridget Hill, "Women, work and the Census : a problem for historians", *History Workshop Journal*, 35 (1993), pp.78-94; Jane Humphries, "Women and paid work", in June Purvis, (ed.), *Women's History: Britain 1850-1945 an introduction* (London,1995), pp.90-98; Williams and Jones, "Women at work in Nineteenth Century Wales", pp.20-29.

[3] In the nineteenth century considerable confusion was displayed over the role of the household as a productive unit. In the 1881 census women helping at home in the family business were omitted from the occupied lists and instead relegated to the residual "unoccupied" class.

[4] Sydna Ann Williams, "Care in the Community : Women and the Old Poor Law in Early Nineteenth-Century Anglesey", *Llafur*, 6, 4 (1995), pp.30-43.

[5] Hill, "Women , work and the census : a problem for historians", p.91.

[6] Williams and Jones, "Women at Work in Nineteenth Century Wales", p.24. By 1911 agriculture had dropped to being the fifth largest source of employment for women in Wales.

[7] P.P. 1919, 1X, *Wages and Conditions of Employment in Agriculture*, p.59; Higgs, "Women, Occupations and Work in the nineteenth-century Census", p.69.

[8] P.P., 1870, X111, *Royal Commission on Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture,* p. 41; Mr. Culley's report for Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire estimates that 80 per cent of women performing general farm work were employed all the year round. It is uncertain, however, whether this figure includes farm servants.

[9] P.P. 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.131.

[10] David W. Howell, *Patriarchs and Parasites : The gentry of South-West Wales in the eighteenth century* (Cardiff, 1986), pp.52-53.
[11] A.G. Prys-Jones, *The Story of Carmarthenshire* (Llandybie, 1972), p.419.
[12] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.41.
[13] Ibid., p.89.
[14] David W. Howell, *Land and People in Nineteenth-Century Wales* (London, 1978), pp.94-95. In contrast, by the mid-nineteenth century, the practice of hiring of servants had diminished in the east and south-east of England, where the specialisation of agriculture towards cereal production lessened the need for year-long labour, K.D.M. Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor: social change and agrarian England 1660-1900* (Cambridge, 1985), p.94.
[15] Ann Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1981), p.4.
[16] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.6.
[17] Howell, *Land and People in Nineteenth-century Wales*, p.95 ; David W. Howell, "The Agricultural Labourer in Nineteenth-Century Wales", *The Welsh History Review*, 6 (1972-73), p.263.
[18] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.37; Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor*, pp.323-325. Young people in the south-east of England left home to take up agricultural work at a later age than their counterparts in Wales. In the period 1700 – 1860 the mean age for boys living in the Eastern and Midland counties was 14.8, while girls were even older, by, overall, a year and a half. The differences between the regions as far as age differentials are concerned can be explained by the greater demand for labour in the west, in the case of females, as farm servants and dairymaids.
[19] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.132.
[20] Ibid., p.111.
[21] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, pp.58, 121, for dates of hiring fairs in various locations.
[22] P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land in Wales and Monmouthshire*, p.608.
[23] Ibid., p.610. The amount of earn money given stayed at the sum of 1s. even down to the twentieth century although by then, depending on how keen the farmer was to employ a particular servant, up to 10s. could be given. It was generally thought that the greater the amount paid, the more binding the agreement would be, see P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and Conditions*, pp.58,121.
[24] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, pp.37, 53.
[25] Ibid., p.51.
[26] Ibid., p.41.
[27] Howell, *Land and People in Nineteenth-century Wales*, p.3.
[28] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.116.
[29] Ibid.
[30] John Gibson, *Agriculture in Wales* (London, 1879), p.50.
[31] Edward Daniel Clarke, *A Tour Through the South of England, Wales and parts of Ireland Made during the Summer of 1791* (London, 1793), p.216.
[32] George Lipscombe, *Journey into South Wales in the year 1799* (1802), p.111.
[33] N.L.W. MS. 2258C.: Sir Christopher Sykes, *Journal of a Tour in Wales*, 1796.
[34] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.52.
[35] Ibid., p.41.
[36] P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, pp.605-6. In Pembrokeshire, it was still considered exceptional for men to milk. In Glamorganshire one commentator stated that, in his experience, men thought it degrading to have to milk and this opinion was shared by their counterparts from the West Country; see also P.P.,1919,1X, *Wages and conditions*, 44; N.L.W. Glyneiddan 93: "Farming in the Vale of Towy, 1870-1950", p.135.
[37] Howell, *Land and People in Nineteenth-Century Wales*, pp.99-101.
[38] *C.J.*, 15 November 1850.
[39] *C.J.*, 17 November 1854, 16 November 1855 and15 November 1867.
[40] Howell, *Land and people in Nineteenth-Century Wales*, p.100.
[41] *C.J.*, 28 February 1862, 11 January 1856 and 13 December 1867; P.P.,1893-94, XXXV1, *Royal Commission on the Agricultural Labourer*: Report of Mr. Daniel Lleufer Thomas on Wales, p.12.
[42] David W.Howell, *The Rural Poor in Eighteenth-Century Wales* (Cardiff, 2000), p.67.
[43] P.P., 1893-94, XXXV1, *The Agricultural Labourer*, p.12.

[44] P.P., 1847, XXV11, *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, pp.401- 409.
[45] E. Le Roy Ladurie, *The peasants of Languedoc* (Urbana, 1974), p.108.
[46] N.L.W., MS. 1759Bii : Walter Davies, Notes taken during Journeys for the Board of Agriculture.
[47] N.L.W.MS. Glyneiddan 93: "Farming in the Vale of Towy, 1870- 1950", pp.139.
[48] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.41.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., p.108.
[52] Much hinges on the groundbreaking work undertaken by Ivy Pinchbeck who states that the industrial revolution generally widened opportunities for working women, including those in agriculture, by allowing the emergence of women day labourers, see Ivy Pinchbeck, *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850* (London, 1930); a subsequent study has diverged from this view, see Snell, *Annals of the Labouring Poor.* More recently a number of regional and local studies have highlighted the range and diversity of women's agricultural employment patterns in the nineteenth century. For an overview of the historiography and debate surrounding rural women's employment in England in the nineteenth century, and in particular their work in agriculture, see Nicola Verdon, *Rural women workers in nineteenth-century England: gender, work and wages* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp.7-39.
[53] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.18.
[54] Michael Roberts, "'Sickles and scythes': women's work at harvest time", *History Workshop Journal,* 7 (1979), pp.3-28, cited by Snell, *Annals of the labouring poor*, 49 ; see also Eve Hostettler, "Gourlay Steel and the sexual division of labour", *History Workshop Journal* ,1V (1977), pp.93-100. The most detailed explanations for women's retreat from agriculture have been reserved for the areas where they were most visibly missed, that is from the arable areas of east Anglia.
[55] David Jenkins, "Rural society inside outside", in D. Smith, (ed.), *A people and a proletariat: essays in the history of Wales, 1780-1980* (London, 1980), pp.118-119.
[56] E.T.T.Collins, "Harvest technology and the labour supply in Britain, 1790-1870", *Economic History Review*, XX11 (1969), pp.453-473.
[57] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.130.
[58] Ibid., p.52. For a full discussion on the topic of rural women subjected to changing constructions of femininity based on a ruling bourgeois ideology, see Sayer, *Women of the fields: representations of rural women in the nineteenth century* (Manchester, 1995).
[59] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, pp.69,132. Opinions would have veered depending on the degree to which women's labour was required for agricultural work, Sayer, *Women of the fields*, p.26.
[60] Sayer, *Women of the fields*, p.58.
[61] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.57.
[62] Angela V. John, (ed.), *Unequal opportunities: women's employment in England 1800-1918* (Oxford, 1986), p.3.
[63] Joan Scott and Louise Tilly, "Women's work and the Family in nineteenth-century Europe", in Elizabeth Whitelegg et al., (eds.), *The Changing Experience of Women* (Oxford, 1982), p.56.
[64] C. Thomas, "Rural Society in Nineteenth-Century Wales : South Cardiganshire in 1851", *Ceredigion*, 6 (1968-71), p.403.
[65] Flora Thompson, *Larkrise to Candleford: a trilogy* (London, 1973), p.18.
[66] Martine Segalen, *Love and Power in the peasant family* (Oxford, 1983), p.151.
[67] Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, p.42.
[68] N.L.W. Dolaucothi Papers: correspondence from Elizabeth Bonville to her mother, Mrs. Jones, under L 638, 639, 647, 649, 651, 655 - 659, 654, 661, 666, 669, 681 , 694 - 697, 699, 700, 703, 705 - 708, 715, 716.
[69] *Cambrian*, 2 March 1805.
[70] N.L.W. Dolaucothi Papers : Correspondence from Elizabeth Bonville to her mother, Mrs. Jones, L 638, 651.
[71] David Levine, *Reproducing families: the political economy of English population history* (Cambridge, 1987), p114; Levine argues that it was the expansion of proto-industrialisation such as the

woollen industry which allowed the growth of female employment. For a brief account of the issues and debates surrounding industrialization and its effects on women's work opportunities in the nineteenth century, see Jane Humphries, "Women and paid work", pp.86-90.

[72] J. Geraint Jenkins, "Rural Industry in Cardiganshire", *Ceredigion*, 6 (1968-71), pp.108-109.

[73] Revd. John Evans, *Letters Written During a Tour Through South Wales in the year 1803* (London, 1804), p.435.

[74] Ibid., pp.108-109.

[75] Ibid., pp.112.

[76] Gwyn Jenkins, "Felt hatmaking in Ceredigion", *Folk life*, 26 (1987-88), p.49.

[77] J. Geraint Jenkins, *The Welsh woollen industry* (Cardiff, 1969), p.252.

[78] There are many references to women knitting, including Clare Sewell Read, "Prize Report on the Farming of South Wales", *The Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*, Vol X (1849), p.149. So adept were women at knitting that they could carry out a multitude of tasks at the same time; a woman was able to travel considerable distances knitting while balancing a pitcher of water on her head and carrying a child in her shawl. See Catherine Hutton, *Reminiscences of a Gentlewoman of the last Century : Letters of Catherine Hutton, edited by her cousin, Mrs. Catherine Hutton Beale* (Birmingham, 1891), p.52, quoted in Caroline Davidson, *A woman's work is never done: A history of housework in the British Isles 1650-1950* (London, 1982), pp.12-14; also Edward Daniel Clarke, *A Tour Through the South of England, Wales and parts of Ireland made in the summer of 1791* (London, 1793). Clarke marvelled at the ability of Welsh women to "carry great weights upon their heads and balance their milk pails, buckets of water ....without taking any hold of them".

[79] Evans, *Letters Written During a Tour through South Wales*, pp.349,357.

[80] Ibid., p.434.

[81] Walter Davies, *General View of the Agriculture and Domestic Economy of South Wales*, vol 2 (London, 1815), pp.442-443.

[82] D.J. Davies, *The Economic History of South Wales prior to 1800* (Cardiff, 1933), p.151.

[83] Angela V. John, *By the sweat of their brow: women workers in Victorian coal mines* (London, 1980), p.53.

[84] Evans, *Letters written during a Tour Through South Wales*, 276-7; John, *By the sweat of their brow*, pp.22,40.

[85] Oral testimony from Ivor Howell , a resident of Kilgetty.

[86] J.G. Penrhyn Jones, "A History of medicine in Wales in the eighteenth century" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Liverpool University), 1957, pp.56-57; E. Donovan, *Descriptive Excursions Through South Wales* (London, 1805), p.198.

[87] *C.J.*, 2 November 1855.

[88] Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, p.10; P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.132.

[89] N.L.W. MS. 1756B 12/6; it was recommended that women and children should "rub the moss from the stems and eradicate it from the roots".

[90] *C.J.*, 17 July 1846.

[91] David W. Howell, "The Economy, 1660-1793", in Brian Howells, (ed.), *Pembrokeshire County History*, vol. iii, *Early Modern Pembrokeshire* (Haverfordwest, 1987), p.321.

[92] William Linnard, "Bark Stripping in Wales", *Folk Life*, 16 (1978), p.58.

[93] Ann Oakley, "Wisewoman and medicine men: changes in the management of childbirth", in Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley, (eds.), *The Rights and Wrongs of Women* (Middlesex, 1976), pp.17-58.

[94] R.T.W. Denning, *The Diary of William Thomas, 1762-1795* (Cardiff, South Wales Record Society, 1995), p.301.

[95] *C.J.*, 3 May 1861.

[96] For the employment of women as community workers in Anglesey before 1834, see Sydna Ann Williams, "Care in the Community : women and the Old Poor Law in Early Nineteenth-Century Anglesey", *Llafur*, 6, 4 (1995), pp.30-43.

[97] William George Spurrell, *History of Carew, Pembrokeshire* (Carmarthen, 1921), p.127.

[98] N.L.W., Eaton, Evans and Williams (Haverfordwest solicitors), 4493.

[99] N.L.W., Mynachlog-ddu Vestry Book 1780-1878, 25 November, 1795.

[100] Thomas, "Rural Society in nineteenth-century Wales", p.403.

[101] Peter Barfoot and John Wilkes, (eds.), *The Universal British Directory of Trade, Commerce and Manufactures, compiled for the years between 1793 and 1798* (Castle Rising, 1993), pp.529-530.
[102] I would like to thank Dr. Mark Matthews for alerting me to this source, the full references for which can be found in id., "In pursuit of profit: local enterprise in south-west Wales in the eighteenth century" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Wales, 1998).
[103] George Borrow, *Wild Wales* (1862, this edn, Llandysul, 1995), p.472.
[104] The definition of a penny capitalist is "a working man or woman who went into business on a small scale in the hope of profit (but the possibility of loss) and made him (or her) self responsible for every facet of the enterprise". John Benson, *The penny capitalists: a study of nineteenth-century working-class entrepreneurs* (Dublin, 1983), p.6.
[105] *C.J.*, 24 October 1856.
[106] *C.J.*, 28 May 1847.
[107] Tibbott, "Laundering in the Welsh home", pp.54-55.
[108] John Brown, *History of Haverfordwest with that of some Pembrokehsire parishes* (Haverfordwest, 1914), p197; Evans, *Letters Written During a Tour Through South Wales*, pp. 213-214.
[109] Jenkins, "Rural Industry in Cardiganshire", pp.121-122.
[110] P.P., 1861, XX111, *Report of the Commissioners into Salmon Fisheries in England and Wales*, p.257.
[111] A.B.Randall, "When Betsy Thompson comes to Carmarthen", *The Carmarthenshire Historian*, XV111 (1981), p.16.
[112] *C.J.*, 14 November 1856.
[113] *C.J.*, 20 June 1856.
[114] Dillwyn Miles, "The Tourist Industry", in David W. Howell, (ed.), *Pembrokeshire County History*, vol.iv, *Modern Pembrokeshire* (Haverfordwest, 1993), pp.198-199.
[115] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.115.
[116] Peter Barfoot and John Wilkes, (eds.), *The Universal British Directory*, pp.529-530.
[117] Susan Skedd, "Women teachers and the expansion of girls' schooling in England, c 1760-1820", in Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus, (eds.), *Gender in eighteenth-century England: roles, representation and responsibilities* (London, 1997), pp.101-105; *C.J.*, 11 July 1845.
[118] *C.J.*, 16 November 1855.
[119] *C.J.*, 18 March 1870.
[120] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.7.
[121] Ibid., p.128.
[122] J. Islan Jones, *Yr Hen Amser Gynt* (Aberystwyth, 1958), p.62, cited in Michael Birtwhistle, "Pobol Y Tai Bach : some aspects of the agricultural labouring Classes of Cardiganshire in the second half of the nineteenth-century" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Wales, 1981).
[123] Martin Connop Price, " 'The Forgotten Coalfield' : The history of the Pembrokeshire coal mining industry" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Wales, 1991).
[124] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.8.
[125] Ibid., p.41.
[126] B.G. Charles, "The Highmead Dairy, 1778-1797", *Ceredigion*, 5 (1964-1967), p.78.
[127] E T Lewis, *Mynachlog-ddu: a guide to its antiquities* (Cardigan, 1969), p.82.
[128] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions of employment*, p.48.
[129] R. Howells, *Stackpole and the Bennions* (Landysul, 1964), p.48.
[130] K. K., *Wales and its People* (London, 1878), p.52.
[131] Fred S. Price, *History of Caio, Carmarthenshire* (Swansea, 1904), p.52.
[132] *Cambrian*, 28 November 1818.
[133] *Cambrian*, 4 November 1815. Lesley Davison, writing on independence and the single women in the eighteenth century, states that out of the 56 rural spinsters' probate records examined by her, 27 possessed either money or had debts owing to them. Quoting Erickson, she describes the financial situation of Edith Griffiths of Llandeilo Fawr, who, at her death "had £160 lent out at interest and was owed a further £154 in unpaid legacies". The estimated £8 a year interest that she would have received on her £160, was undoubtedly a welcome income for a single woman. Lesley Davison, "Spinsters were doing it for themselves: independence and the single woman in early eighteenth-century rural Wales", in

Michael Roberts and Simone Clarke, (eds.), *Woman and Gender in Early Modern Wales* (Cardiff, 2000), pp.199-200.

[134] Richard Williams, (Poet of Vanity) "A new song illustrating the ways of the world at the present time and the difference which existed in the days of yore" (Caernarvon, 1850).

[135] Hugh Evans, *The Gorse Glen* A translation by E. Morgan Humphreys of the Welsh *Cwm Eithin* (Liverpool, 1948) p.31. In the same publication, a chapter entitled Man and maid affords a good insight into the working conditions and relationships of farm servants at a north Wales farm in the nineteenth century.

[136] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.5.

[137] Herbert M. Vaughan, *South Wales Squires* (London, 1926), pp.109-110.

[138] Fear of her master's threats prompted Mary Jones, who was in service near Carmarthen, to abscond after having dropped a pail of milk from her head. Tired and hungry she was eventually sighted miles away in Aberdare, *Welshman,* 16 September 1836. Especially at risk were young servants such as twelve-year-old Susan Morgan who was whisked around by her hair and beaten by her employer John Lloyd of Begelly. Brought to trial, he received a custodial sentence of two months and was bailed to keep the peace for six months. *C.J.*, 31 May 186I; see also *C.J.*, 19 May 1865 and 18 April 1856.

[139] *C.J.*, 14 August 1848.

[140] *C.J.*, 1 February 1850.

[141] *C.J.*, 5 September 1856.

[142] *Cambrian,* 9 February 1809.

[143] Pamela Horn, *Victorian Countrywomen* (Oxford, 1991), pp.117.

[144] N.L.W., Dolaucothi Papers, including correspondence from Elizabeth Bonville to her mother, Mrs. Jones, L 706.

[145] For a collection of such cases, see *C.J.*, 19 August 1859, 4 December 1857, 28 February 1862, 9 August 1861, 14 June 1861, 11 January 1856, 18 July 1867 and 13 December 1867.

[146] *C.J.*, 21 January 1853 and 11 February 1859.

[147] Reasons for dismissal might include a servant's misbehaviour or failure to discharge her duties sufficiently well; see *C.J.*, 26 October 1855 and 14 March 1856.

[148] D. J. Williams, *The old farmhouse* (London, 1961), p.230.

[149] *C.J.*, 7 June 1867.

[150] *C.J.*, 6 February 1857; see also 10 March 1854 and 1 February 1861.

[151] The following passage on migration is brief in content and analysis. Such a fascinating subject deserves a far more detailed and sophisticated treatment and would be an area that I would like to investigate more thoroughly in the future.

[152] R.T.W. Denning, *The Diary of William Thomas, 1762-1795* (Cardiff, South Wales Record Society, 1995), p.173.

[153] Howell, *The Rural Poor in Eighteenth-Century Wales*, p.85.

[154] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, pp.51-52.

[155] Ruth Jones, *Atgofion Ruth Mynachlog* (Llandysul, 1939), p.21.

[156] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, pp.130,132.

[157] Ibid., pp.51-52.

[158] Olwen Hufton, "The rise of the people; life and death among the very poor", in Alfred Cobban, (ed.), *The Eighteenth Century : Europe in the Age of the Enlightenment* (London 1969), p.298, cited in Howell, *The Rural Poor in Eighteenth-Century Wales*, p.85.

[159] John Williams-Davies, "Merched y Gerddi : A Seasonal Migration of Female Labour from rural Wales", *Folklife* 15 (1977), pp.12-21; most of what follows relating to the market garden girls is taken from this source. See also Pinchbeck, *Woman Workers and the Industrial Revolution*, pp.61-62.

[160] F. Godwin and S Toulson, *The drovers' roads of Wales* (London, 1977), p.11.

[161] R Gwyndaf, "Abergwesin, y Porthmyn a Ruth Watcyn", *Medel* (1985), p.38.

[162] Williams-Davies, "Merdded y Gerddi: a Seasonal Migration . . ", p.20.

[163] "Recollections of the Dairy Trade Forty Years Ago", *The Cowkeeper and Dairyman's Journal*, November 1882, January 1883, p.62.

[164] *Cambrian,* 5 January 1805.

[165] P.P., 1882, XV, *Royal Commission on Agriculture*: Mr. Doyle's Report on Wales, p.8.
[166] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.159.
[167] Ibid.
[168] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, pp.63,163. Accounting for the considerable number of marriages made by Cardiganshire girls in Radnorshire, it was said that they were hard-working and hence good wife material.
[169] Edward Higgs, " Domestic service and household production", in Angela V. John, (ed.), *Unequal Opportunities: Women's Experience in England, 1800-1918* (Oxford, 1986), p.139.
[170] P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, p.58. One of the reasons given for the decrease in female migration to the horticultural fields from Wales in the second half of the nineteenth century was that alternative employment had been found in domestic service, see Horn, *Victorian Countrywomen*, p.157.

2

Wives and The Domestic Economy – A Multiplicity of Roles.

Gwae wr, a gaffo ddrygwraig.

To get a bad wife

Is ruin for life. [1]

To a considerable extent, a girl's upbringing in south-west Wales was designed to equip her with the skills perceived as necessary for her prescribed future role as a wife and mother. From a young age, children were used by their parents as extra help in and around the home and especially on farmholdings when there was a shortage of hands. During the summer months, sons and daughters were expected to help with hay-making and harvesting, to look after cows, to bird scare, to bee keep, to help in the house and to perform a host of other tasks associated with the needs of agriculture.[2] Any formal education fitted around the completion of such tasks, and during the slacker winter months school attendance accordingly increased significantly, one estimate calculating a 10 per cent rise in boys of ten to thirteen years of age, and a telling 20 per cent in girls, the latter's greater childminding skills accounting for the difference in ratio.[3] Even when children did attend school, the level of learning was, in the main, adjudged to be well below acceptable levels. The infamous 1847 Education Report on elementary schools in Wales convincingly highlighted the gross inadequacies of elementary education in the Principality and reinforced what was anyway suspected. Its findings have led historians of Welsh education to identify Wales as " a land whose children and young people were seriously and culpably disadvantaged".[4] Girls were said to have even lower educational opportunities and attainment than boys and this shortfall was reflected in their reading and writing skills. Of Carmarthen, for

instance, it was purported that not only could fewer females read, in comparison to men, but that very few, indeed, could write. [5]

There was generally little urgency among the farming fraternity to educate their daughters, who, according to one witness in north Carmarthenshire, could only hope to receive a "quarter occasionally", a consequent dearth of learning said to become glaringly exposed later when they totalled figures in markets.[6] A different attitude was displayed towards boys who, it was thought, needed reading and writing skills for their future advancement.[7] Labourers were reluctant to send their children to day school, and when they infrequently did, they were far more likely to send their sons than their daughters. Any formal learning that girls in labouring families were likely to receive was given at Sunday schools.[8] Pivotal for the education of many, especially in rural locations, tuition in Sunday schools was nevertheless largely confined to providing scriptural knowledge.[9]

Commenting on a suitable curriculum for females, the Revd. R.B. Jones of Cilmaenllwyd in Carmarthenshire claimed that, "Whatever the mother can do, the daughter is ambitious enough to be thought equally clever". Girls were better being employed, he contended, "and thus properly brought up to the manifold duties of after life, and [thus] much better educated than if confined over much to the three rules, without the necessary precautions against being spoiled".[10] Rather than educate labourers in the "ologies" to improve their lot, advised the outspoken and reactionary Revd. Buckby, the incumbent of the south Pembrokeshire parish of Begelly, when speaking at the Narberth Farmers' Club annual ploughing match in 1860, local girls should be taught how to make a man's shirt, how to manage his money and to consider ways in which to contribute to his comfort when he comes home. [11] These two views accurately reflect conventional Victorian thinking, in that the type of education deemed suitable for girls

was thought to be that which would enable them to manage and use their husband's income to the best advantage with the aim of ensuring an adequate standard of comfort for the labouring population. It was advocated that they be taught the basic principles of domestic economy.[12] Channelled in this way, the future prospects for young females living in the Principality were limited indeed. Advertisements in 1848 for a schoolmistress at the Narberth Workhouse specifically stipulated that applicants be competent to instruct not only in reading, writing and arithmetic, but also sewing, knitting, making clothes and other domestic duties.[13] Likewise, any education given in schools of industry concentrated on the female skills that would enable them to become, firstly, useful servants and later competent, thrifty housewives and mothers. What obtained at the Swansea House of Industry no doubt applied in other institutions; whereas boys were employed in picking oakum and basket-making and similar pursuits, girls, for their part, *were taught to clean, cook, mend and make clothes and wash and iron the linen of inmates, while* religious observance on the part of all inmates was assiduously attended to by regular attendance at Church.[14] Visitors to Haverfordwest's school of industry during the annual Easter Examination in 1867, expressed pleasure in seeing so many examples of good needlework skills and passed comment on the neat appearance of the girls in their reward frocks. [15]

Designing an alternative curriculum thought suitable for girls' specific needs was, of course, not new and not the prerogative of the labouring classes. Daughters in eighteenth-century Welsh gentry families were generally educated towards acquiring the social skills and accomplishments necessary for the drawing room rather than any serious academic endeavour. In contrast to their brothers, who were taught formally by professionals, girls were likely to receive their education through a "diverse mix of people" - often family friends and relations - and acquired by visits to their homes, only certain subjects calling for the appointment of

governesses and specialist teachers.[16] At the Picton Castle home in Pembrokeshire of Sir John Philipps, for instance, where a governess was employed, her young charges were sometimes accompanied by friends from neighbouring estates to study subjects that included French, music, dancing, and needlework.[17] Although boarding schools for girls were gaining in popularity in the nineteenth century, it could be argued that even then the most important influence in a daughter's education was still her mother.

While concentrating on delivering what was seen as a fitting and necessary education for females, educators not only restricted girls' chances in the employment field by confining them to a narrow syllabus of domestic life-skills, but largely ignored the intrinsic nature of Welsh rural social and economic life, where women played multifarious and vital roles. While emphasising the accepted wisdom of domesticated woman, the angel of the house caring for and keeping watch over her family, policy-makers sought to overlook the realities of many women's lives, where housework and caring constituted only a portion of their multi-dimensional working life. Throughout the nineteenth century, much of the twentieth century, and, to some extent, amongst farming families today, an enduring feature of Welsh rural society has been the "family economy" whereby "most productive activity was based in a household and those labouring often included family members".[18] Prominent amongst its characteristics are "the inter-dependence of work and residence, of household labour needs, subsistence requirements, and family relationships".[19] In contrast to England, where the consolidation of farms and the capitalistic nature of agriculture marked an end to this traditional arrangement of labour, the nature of Welsh agriculture, with its proliferation of small-sized, barely economically viable holdings, necessitated the continuance of family-run units. While many small farms were unable to afford extra help by way of servants, equally, labouring cottagers relied on family members to

contribute to the family budget by tending their small parcels of land, engaging in cottage craft, or resorting to any means possible to generate additional income. It was commonly expected that married women pull their weight, and young wives who appeared to shirk their marital responsibilities were subjected to the popular saying "she has broken her elbow at the Church door".[20]

In rural Wales, as elsewhere in Europe where the major source of income was derived from land split up into small farms and holdings, the family, then, was the "crucial unit of organisation". Thus family members freely gave their time and energy to ensure the continuation of the property, from which, they, in turn, derived their living.[21] Of vital importance to the well being of the family economy, therefore, was the active co-operation of all members of the household. In such an arrangement a wife's work constituted an important component of the family's income and hence was essential to the family's economic survival. Both husband and wife worked together in partnership, for both were needed to fulfil the tasks necessary for survival, and to contribute to the "family purse", the proceeds of which went to provide for the family, any surplus accrued being ploughed back into the holding for future years. Assigned different but complementary tasks, husbands and wives usually worked in different parts of the holding.[22] Whilst the men were occupied in the fields, women normally stayed within an area bordering the farmhouse or cottage, and encompassing barn and farmyard. Within these boundaries, she undoubtedly would have undertaken responsibility for generating earnings in the form of cash or kind.[23] In towns, wives would have helped their husbands in their business concerns, running shops, book-keeping and managing servants. Less self-sufficient due to the absence of land, townswomen would have spent a considerable amount of time in markets and fairs, checking prices and acquiring provisions for their families.[24]

Where there was a diversification of holdings or business interests incorporating a number of separate enterprises, a common occurrence in Wales, a wife might well look after one aspect, while the husband managed another. Family-run concerns might include, for example, an inn, which would be run by the wife, and a separate farming enterprise under the supervision of the husband. Overall management of family enterprises usually remained with the male head of household, however, in whose responsibility lay the separate concerns. In busier urban locations, women devised their own ways of earning to help sustain the household economy. Where there were itinerant populations, for instance, a wife might take in lodgers, while their husbands carried out their own trade. Others perhaps dealt in second-hand goods, opened shops or worked in the service sector, undertaking laundry or waitressing in local hotels.[25] While census returns correctly highlight the predominance of men as the head of households and their roles as major breadwinners, by relegating wives to subordinate positions of dependency, the records deprive them of recognition for the often considerable economic input they brought to a household.[26] That much of women's work, casual and part-time in nature, has become invisible from the records has already been discussed in the preceding chapter.

In addition to her role as a contributory member working towards the household's income, much of a wife's time, of course, was taken over by the non-remunerative tasks involved in safeguarding the well being of her family, that is, undertaking domestic chores including food preparation, tasks, as we have seen, that were duplicated in employment opportunities outside the family holding. Fires had to be lit, meals prepared, washing done, and animals to be cared for, in addition to the processing of home-grown and raised produce which was a necessary requirement for subsistence living. All were included within the realms of a wife's responsibilities and were conducted against a backdrop of childbirth and childcare. Calculations using the average age a

woman married correspond with evidence taken from census material, in giving, as a rough guide, a family size of between five or six children. [27]

Yet women's influence extended in other directions, for they were prime agents in providing the links whereby family and kinship networks were maintained and consolidated, and, by doing so, played an essential role in holding together the fabric upon which lay the very essence of Welsh rural society.[28] As Anderson observes when talking about similarly constructed rural Lancashire:

> ... this strong commitment to family and wider kinship bonds was due, at the structural level, to the fact that it was very difficult for any person in these societies to solve the problems with which life faced him without recourse to assistance from others, and that *kin provided the source of assistance which gave the optimum bargain to actors in their* relationships with others. In the rural areas, indeed, relationships with kin offered almost the only bargain at all which could be taken without very serious and even crippling reductions in life chances. [29]

As well as listing benefits conferred by kinship networks such as employment opportunities, marriage, childcare, sickness, advice, emotional support and maintenance in old age, Anderson also points to the importance of maintaining kinship ties in tight-knit communities where aberrant behaviour could result in sanctions as gossip and withdrawal of assistance from neighbours.[30]

Being the pivotal person in the household, on whom much of the health and nurture of the family rested, the wife's role was paramount; any shortcomings or deviations from her

responsibilities could seriously hamper the efficacy of the family unit and the well-being of family members. Research on re-marriage patterns in England, France and Norway, for instance, shows that there was a far more rapid rate of re-marriage amongst widowers, as compared to widows, a significant number of which occurred within one year of a wife's death. [31] Whilst age, dependant children, economic or legal stipulations, amongst other considerations, could prove stumbling blocks to a widow remarrying, which would in some way explain the above patterns, it could also be agued that, after a bereavement, a widower's concerns would include the need to find a partner to ensure the smooth continuity of his household. Reluctant himself to undertake duties and tasks normally assigned to females for protracted periods, a new wife was a cheaper option to a grieving widower than employing a housekeeper. [32]

Further discussion of a wife's role within the Welsh rural family demands greater focus on the two-class nature of Welsh rural society and a need to differentiate between the experiences of women who belonged to farming families to those of the labouring fraternity, the cottage wives.[33] Aside from status discrimination, in most ways both groupings were closely interlinked. Similarly bound to the land, afflicted by poverty and largely dependant upon each other for survival, as such they shared much common ground in terms of life experience, coping with similar everyday issues and encountering near-identical problems. Overwhelming evidence speaks of lowly, squalid, overcrowded and wholly inadequate living conditions within which the majority of the rural population lived.[34] Surviving as habitations in Carmarthenshire throughout the nineteenth century, especially in the more remote rural districts, were "clom" cottages, described in 1814 as comprising "mud walling of about five feet high, a hipped end, low roofing of straw with a wattle and daub chimney kept together with hay rope bandages. .." and said to resemble a "hen brooding over her chickens".[35] "Miserable in the extreme", cottages in

Cardiganshire were built of dark slate rock enclosing tiny closed windows, smoke from the turf fire billowed out, instead of up, through the doorway, while rain and wind gushed down the gaping hole in the roof of the low wattle construction which constituted the chimney. Pembrokeshire cottages, despite their picturesque look of white-washed walls and roofs, concealed interiors rank with dampness and little through draft. One obstetrician described how his feet sank into the mud of the floor of the cottage he was visiting and how a hole had to be drilled through the cottage wall in order to effect some ventilation, a task that was only too easy to accomplish in the general decay of the structure.[36] While the more affluent farming families might have been better equipped by way of furniture, living conditions within farmhouses were not always appreciably better. Even by the 1890's, despite some improvements, smaller farms continued to remain in a dreadful state of repair. Servant girls slept upstairs in the farmhouse *loft, with only rough boughs, twigs and overlain rushes, heather or fern supported by the rafters* separating them from the outside thatch.[37] According to Miss Kate Jenkins, one of the few female witnesses consulted by the Welsh Land Commission in the 1890s to give evidence, two or three farmhouses in her parish of Llangadock in Carmarthenshire were in dire need of repair, with leaky roofs, damp walls and rotten doors. No English farmer, she maintained, would inhabit the houses that a Welsh farmer lived in.[38]

So bad were the conditions wherein the tenant population of Aberaeron in Cardiganshire lived, that one observer was given to comment that "some landlords house their dogs and horses better than they do their tenants". Cottagers and farming families alike lived in close proximity to their animals.[39] It was a situation which horrified outsiders unused to scenes such as those seen inside Pembrokeshire cottages where, they recorded, father, mother, grown-up children, babies in arms, pigs and poultry lived days and nights together in conditions of total squalor. [40]

Bad as were English farm labourers' cottages in the 1890s, those in Wales were judged to be worse, a reflection of the chronic lack of capital in Welsh agriculture. [41]

Of such poor construction and repair, many farmhouses, like cottages, were open to the vagaries of the weather, and extremes of climate only served to exacerbate the misery. One hapless occupant of a farmhouse recalled moving the bed three times on a rainy night owing to the leaking roof, while Jane Rees, living on her family's Cynwyl Elfed farm in Carmartheshire, complained that snow filtered into her upstairs room to such an extent that on many mornings she woke up to two inches of snow on the bed, while, elsewhere in the house, falls of up to two or three foot were found.[42] A heavy snowfall in Dale in south Pembrokeshire in January 1814 totally obliterated from view a small cottage belonging to one poor and feeble woman, who had to rely on neighbours to cut through the snow to rescue her from what could have literally been her shroud.[43] Hot weather in turn brought its own problems. One Pembrokeshire wife told how the heat upstairs in her cottage was so unbearable that she, her husband and their three children inhabited the small downstairs room which doubled as a kitchen in the daytime and as a bedroom at night with two beds which folded up during the day.[44]

Although the lack of material possessions and the smallness of the home, in some respects made cleaning simpler, nevertheless domestic chores were overwhelmingly labour intensive, time consuming and, in view of the material deprivation and poverty experienced by most, disheartening in the extreme. Despite this, there is evidence that suggests, although not conclusively so, that women did the best they could to provide some modicum of home comfort. One visitor to South Wales, Thomas Roscoe, commented that the women in Cardiganshire dressed remarkably tidily amongst their miserable surroundings and evinced a pride in what they did possess (which, according to him was mostly crockery, in the form of jugs). [45] And even

those who criticised female morality in Wales like the Commissioners looking into the state of education in Wales in 1847, while not in unanimous agreement, were, in the main, fulsome in their praise of their industriousness and sole management of the household. [46]

In addition to the generally unsatifactory living conditions they both experienced, farming and cottage wives had similar responsibilities for childcare and a workload centred on maintaining the upkeep of their families and their holdings. Furthermore, the two classes were interchangeable, in that the desire to acquire a farm was often achieved by a labouring family, while a farmer could be reduced, by the vagaries of fortune, to the status of a labourer. The very narrow gap which had traditionally existed between small farmers, labourers and their respective wives continued in most parts of west Wales, with its characteristically small farms, at least until the middle of the nineteenth century and beyond, and gave rise to a natural closeness and easy familiarity, whereby cottagers' wives referred to those of neighbouring farmers by such nicknames, as Molly Cwmdwyfrau and Rachel Tygwyn, labels thought unacceptable and disrespectful by some observers more used to the wider social gulf existing between the two groups in the richer agricultural districts.[47]

Although in many ways farmers' wives and cottagers' wives led similar existences, there were, nevertheless, significant differences separating the two categories. Their life experiences diverged, not only in the outward practical manner in which they conducted their domestic role, as for instance, in the organisation and management of their households and in the intricacies of their working lives, but also in the more subtle areas of expectation and opportunity. In a closer examination, therefore, they are treated separately.

Farmers' wives

Ni lwydd cell goreisteddwraig

(The wife, who all the day doth rest

Seldom of dairies has the best.) [48]

Amongst the many assets a farmer's wife brought with her on the occasion of her marriage, which might include savings or, more commonly, settlement in the form of stock or money, the most important was her genuine commitment to a life of active participation, in partnership with her husband, within the family holding. An outstanding feature of the Welsh rural economy, with its emphasis on subsistence agriculture, was the existence of small, and in some cases, barely viable family-run farms of between five and a hundred acres. [49] As explained by Doyle's report of 1882, the small acreage of many individual holdings, and the poor soil that was characteristic of many farms, rendered farmers unable to sustain a regular expenditure on hired labour, instead calling on his family, wife and children to undertake much of the work needed.[50] The active co-operation of all family members was therefore essential for the undertaking to succeed and there is no lack of evidence to support the commitment and hard work undertaken by farmers' wives and families on their respective family holdings. One witness to the Welsh Land Commission of the 1890s referred to a small farm in North Carmarthenshire, where the daughters did similar work to that of men except for ploughing. It was noted that both the mother and her daughters worked very hard. [51] Reporting on agricultural practices in Lampeter-Velfrey in Pembrokeshire, the Revd. R Lewis described a situation whereby the work on farms was undertaken mainly by those who lived in the farmhouse. The farms were small and the farmer's wife and daughters, with the addition of perhaps one hired

maid, did all the women's work except hay reaping and digging potatoes where a few others would be casually employed.[52]

In the climate of self-sufficiency which characterised family farming in Wales, farmers' wives utilized the farm's produce to provide food and clothing for the family. Foodstuffs were prepared from what was grown and cloth was, in many cases, woven and spun in the farmhouse.[53] Avoiding waste at all costs by using all available resources, as much as possible was adapted or modified to fit a particular purpose. Those keeping geese, for instance, used goose feathers to fill pillows and mattresses, while the birds' wings were utilised as dusters to clean and dust the corners of rooms. [54] It was a matter of pride, as well as necessity, for the farm to provide most of the farmer's and his family's needs. The first milling of the wheat grown would be examined by the farmer's wife with keen interest as to its quality, for this would determine the standard of bread eaten on the farm until the next harvest. [55] Thrift and foresight were sound attributes to ensure the continued prosperity not only of the farm but of future family members. As D. Parry-Jones has remarked:

> "As the years prospered the family, it was the practice - and considered a sound form of investment - to lay in stocks of material, generations before it was needed. I heard my mother say of two daughters of a neighbouring family that they indeed would be lucky fellows who married those girls, for they would not have to buy clothes for them as long as they lived, as they had drawers full of them." [56]

Proficiency in the art of cooking, in order to provide adequate and palatable food, was a vitally important attribute for farmers' wives to possess, for it would become

known in the neighbourhood if a particular farm served inferior scanty fare to its hired help, and such knowledge could create difficulties at hiring times when good staff were being sought; indeed, substandard fare was considered a valid enough reason, in the eyes of servant and magistrate alike, to leave service. [57] When later in the century domestic servants proved more difficult to come by, farmers' wives on the larger Carmarthenshire farms were expected to cook, not only for the family, but also for any servants or outdoor labourers the farm might employ, a duty that they were said to cheerfully abandon.[58] If not actually required to cook, it was vital to the interests of the farm for the wife to ensure that the maids responsible for meals were well versed in the arts of baking and plain cooking, and were carefully supervised.[59] At certain times during the agricultural calendar, farmers' wives had the additional responsibility, and work, of feeding the extra help that was needed. During the shearing season in the upland areas, for example, a large holding might employ the help of upwards of a hundred and twenty people from the neighbourhood, all of whom would expect some remuneration at the farmer's kitchen.[60] The responsibilities inherent in the preparation and serving of food can be best illustrated by the plight of Llandybie (Carmarthenshire) farmer's wife, Mrs. Parry, who had to contend with the blame when thirty of her harvest helpers were struck with food poisoning after having attended her supper at the end of their day's labour in the field. [61] An abundant supply of home-produced foodstuffs was not only important for the keeping of a "good table", thus maintaining a family's status within their community, but facilitated the bestowal of gifts and gratuities, as thanks for assistance and favours, and as a means of buttressing kinship networks. [62]

Market days would see the farmer's wife selling farm produce and buying necessary provisions. Thomas Roscoe thus reports seeing farmers' wives and their daughters riding to Aberystwyth market with sacks of corn to sell hung over their saddles. With the revenue from the corn, they would then purchase any goods needed for the household, perhaps a teapot or a frying pan, which they would then place in the corn sack for the return journey home. [63] On fair days, it was common to see women, quaintly dressed in out-dated beaver hats and home-spun clothes, walking into town from the surrounding countryside, sometimes with the help of their children, driving cows or pigs in front of them to be sold. By the middle of the nineteenth century, such sights offended the sensibilities of outside observers who had grown unused to seeing comparable scenes in the English stock markets. One acid commentator at Llanelli fair, Carmarthenshire, at mid-century, heartily condemned the sight of women undertaking such, for him, highly improper activities and, blaming husbands for exploiting their female charges, remarked scathingly in the *Carmarthen Journal*: "for to such dainty uses are the farmers of South Wales willing to put their wives and daughters in the year 1862".[64] Attending market for the sale of produce, of course, not only provided the wife with the financial means to purchase necessary items for the household, but gave her a valid opportunity to leave the environment of the farm and to come into contact with the outside world.

Much of a wife's experience and ability to cope with her allotted tasks in dairying and household management were, as discussed earlier, learned from early childhood in the course of being brought up on a similar holding. From a very young age, daughters, as well as sons, were expected to help on the family farm, much of this early work providing a sound training for what might inevitably constitute their role as adults. Until their early teens, when they might be encouraged to enter service, sons would look after the cows, scare off birds from crops and bee-

keep, while girls were employed in the house helping their mothers with a range of domestic duties, including childcare.[65] Through helping their mother dispense many of the duties carried out on the farms, such as working in the dairy and making butter, many would, by the age of fifteen, have become competent in these important female-orientated tasks.[66] The vital job of maintaining hygeine and cleanliness in the dairy was the responsibility of the farmer's wife and her daughters.[67] Often, too, a daughter would be given lessons in needlework for a few months in order to mend and sew for her own and neighbouring families.[68] Hard working from an early age, they were considered industrious and suitable material to make "first class" servants.[69] Rising very early to do a morning's work before school and returning to do more chores, farming children were thought better workers than cottage children who were not subjected to such responsibilities so early in their upbringing. [70]

Even amongst the well-to-do and gentry families, where survival did not depend on the unstinting commitment of family members to the domestic economy, wives continued to take responsibility for what was regarded as their own sphere of influence, that is, the often onerous responsibility of managing their households. Long used to supervising the smooth and effective running of the house, among her other duties the "servant question", that is the organising of her domestic staff, would have preoccupied much of a middle-class woman's time. Included within this orbit would have been a strict attendance to the moral and religious well-being of the servants, as befitting the highly evangelical attitudes expected in respectable households. [71]

In the event of the absence of a husband, however, wives of gentlemen often undertook further responsibilities, away from their immediate households, to encompass the family estate. While admittedly not involved directly in the hard physical work associated with running a mansion's home farm, its management nevertheless fell to wives called upon to deputize for

spouses. Mrs. Jones of Pantglas mansion in Carmarthenshire, for instance, dealt with all the household matters, including building renovations, while her husband, the Member of Parliament for the county, sat in London.[72] In the period around the 1780s, Anne Phillips of Cwmgwili mansion in Carmarthenshire, although able to defer to her husband when necessary, was nevertheless left to manage the estate alone while he spent a significant amount of time in London in his capacity as an M.P.[73] Displaying a keen interest in the management of the dairy, she was intent on assuring her husband that she sold fresh butter every week from the estate, stating, in March 1792, that she received a shilling a pound for it.[74] Likewise engaged in the estate's other agricultural endeavours, she actively participated by helping manage its home farm, forming valued judgements and reaching her own decisions. Her knowledge of crop growing, for instance, is exposed in her letters. Writing to her husband, she explains: "The wet weather has prevented our sowing all the oats till today. It is now fine and if it continues we shall sow all the barley in four days. I believe there never was a finer spring for grass than at present." [75]

Another gentlewoman who exhibited a genuine appreciation for agricultural issues and a keen interest in improving tenants' farming practices was Mrs. Brigstocke of the Blaenpant estate in Cardiganshire, who devised a cash incentive of £20, to be awarded around the time of the January rent, to the best crop grower amongst her tenantry.[76] The highest praise by her contemporaries was reserved for the already mentioned Anne Evans, after she successfully took over the running of the dairy at Highmead mansion in Cardiganshire in 1787. Described by the glowing accolade, "though a lady, her agricultural knowledge and practice far exceeded that of any man in the county", her surviving account books and journals bear valuable witness to her assiduous and careful management of the estate, especially her dairy, where she recorded the

milk yield from individual cows, the amount of butter which each produced as well as her yearly profits.[77] Fastidious about the quality of her butter, she displayed a willingness to experiment in order to improve her produce and showed a keen understanding of animal husbandry, markets and accounting procedures, including projections of yields.

Although there existed a division of labour, with domestic chores, childminding and duties involving the dairy and farmyard considered exclusively a wife's responsibility, the family was nevertheless fluid in nature, for, in certain circumstances, the strict demarcation of roles would be overturned, family members adapting to new conditions by exchanging duties if it was considered expedient to do so. A well-known example of role reversal is revealed in the writings of Hugh Evans, who grew up on a small Ruthin farm in Denbighshire, north Wales, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. He relates how Richard Jones' parents changed roles during a time of bad harvest when his mother became responsible for supplying the major source of their income by knitting, an occupation she had previously undertaken as a part-time pursuit when not engaged on her other household responsibilities. Instigated by her, a bargain was struck with her husband:

> "I'll see to food for us and both the children all winter if thou, in addition to looking after the horse, the cattle and pigs wilt do the churning, wash up, make the beds and clean the house. I'll make the butter myself. "How wilt thou manage? Asked my father. "I will knit," said she. "We have wool if thou wilt card it, I'll spin". The bargain was struck; my father did the housework in addition to the work on the farm and my mother knitted. . . and so it was (*that*) she kept us alive until the next harvest". [78]

Here Richard Jones' mother displayed not only practical support for her husband, but her versatility, for, by temporarily converting her small subsidiary enterprise into the family's major source of revenue, she became responsible for sustaining their smallholding's economic viability. Like other wives who contributed directly to a farm's economy in hard times and years of uncertainty, she would have, in addition, given inestimable emotional support for generating moral strength, an essential and crucial element for the survival of a family farm. A wife's prowess to bolster flagging spirits stemmed from her own understanding and hard-felt concerns for her family's situation. On the smaller holdings above all others, both husband and wife shared the worry and burden of eking a living in the face of hardship and spiralling costs. In the hard-pressed year of 1843, a Carmarthenshire farmer's wife voiced her fears when speaking of the hand-to-mouth existence she, her husband and her two grown-up children endured on their small rented farm of twenty-four acres north of Kidwelly. Despite the toil and thrift of her husband, the holding, along with a few acres elsewhere, barely supported them after the crippling rents had been paid. Living an impoverished, scrimping life, hardly spending a shilling, she worried about their inability to save for old age and not being able to give anything to her children:

"We work as hard as labourers", said she, "and live as hardly. You must not suppose that the bread I have handed you is what we usually live upon; we keep a little of that sort for strangers and chance callers ... we cannot save (for old age) and it grieves us we cannot give a little to start the children". [79]

It was not only her immediate family that concerned the Welsh farmer's wife however, for in the manner of "Cymhorthen", the widespread custom of mutual help, she was vigilant in her responsibilities towards the more needy of the neighbourhood poor upon whom she bestowed largesse by way of produce from the farm.[80] That acute observer of the Welsh countryside, D. Parry-Jones writes that his own mother frequently welcomed elderly, solitary women and cottage wives to the farm where she, with much tact, for there was a reluctance to accept what was thought of as charity, would "persuade" them, almost as a ritual when parting, to accept a gift of perhaps some fresh produce, in the form of bread, cheese or a little milk to take away.[81] The reciprocal arrangement which characterised much of rural life, and on which farms depended, was to a considerable extent contingent on the generosity extended by farming families towards the cottagers, from whom much of the regular and incidental help for the farm came. The scarce availability of female labour gave the farmer's wife an extra worry, for, if deprived of domestic help due to the departure of a maid before her year's contract ended, she would have difficulty in replacing her. Further burdened thus with additional work, her only recourse would have been to ask one, or more, of the cottage wives to assist her until the next hiring season when another maid could be employed.[82] Farmers' wives might look after the cottage children while the latters' mothers worked for the farm during the harvest, and they were responsible for issuing whatever dues were expected or had been promised as part payment. Likewise it might be to the farmer's wife whom the cottager would turn if in need of advice or assistance in the form of food or implements. Especially problematic for farmers' wives was the burden of having their own identities swallowed up in the concerns of others, the most notably of those being, of course, family responsibilities and maintenance, but also, at times, those of the wider community, all of which would inevitably have denied them any chance of attaining individual goals.

By the 1850s, especially in the more advanced regions of eastern and central England, changing agricultural practices and increased prosperity had raised the expectations and status of the farming families, which in turn led to a distancing on the part of farmers' wives and daughters from actual involvement in the running of the holding. Rather than attend to her traditional role associated with the farm, that is of dairying, caring for farmyard animals and other manual tasks, a farmer's wife instead came to adopt a mode of gentility, distancing herself from the servants and devoting her hours attending to her family's home comforts and caring for her children.[83] Likewise, the wealthier farmers' daughters were also becoming detached from the daily chores associated with the farm by becoming channelled into the parlour, with all its attendant associations with art, music and genteel conversation, a situation bitterly decried by Richard Jeffreys in *Hodge and his Masters*.[84] In the more prosperous agricultural regions of Wales, among some of the wealthier farms, a similar situation was said to exist. According to members of Carmarthenshire Farmers' Club in 1864, the wives of gentlemen farmers in the county were seldom found to superintend the dairy, and it was acknowledged that it was hard to make any profits from this sector of agriculture as a consequence of their absence.[85] In the 1870s in the Carmarthenshire village of Laugharne, although it was acknowledged that the availability of cloth and easier access to shops abated the need for the making of homespun materials, farmers' daughters found carding, spinning and weaving beneath them, preferring instead to adopt the more genteel habits of fancy work and crochet.[86] For the majority of farming families, however, this was not the case. The lives of most farmers' daughters in south-west Wales were similar to those experienced by farm servants. Still wearing "homely stuff", and living frugally on the farm, they were expected, whenever necessary, to hawk dairy produce around from door to door and travel into town in "a mud-covered cart", or sit behind a manservant on a rough-

coated cart horse, lowly experiences unlikely to be undergone by their more genteel sisters elsewhere.[87] In farms of between twelve and fifteen acres, the farmer's family still did the work on the farm, with the wife generally undertaking the work of a dairywoman, [88]

Invaluable as active partners in the family business, nevertheless, in terms of the management and control of the holding, farm wives, like those in other enterprises, were, outwardly at least, subordinate to their husbands. As Davidoff and Hall have convincingly stated in their aptly entitled chapter, "The hidden investment", " For women, marriage was indeed a 'trade', and as economic actors, they appear as shadows behind the scenes of the family enterprise", a necessary situation when women's role was perceived to be firmly within the parameters of domesticity. [89]

Facilitating and reinforcing a wife's state of dependency were the laws pertaining to property, where possessions lay firmly in the hands of a husband. Being marginalized in terms of ownership, a wife's control and decision-making powers were significantly reduced. Generally, only if she were widowed could a wife acquire possession of the farm in her own right. It is significant that census returns for the years 1851, 1861 and 1871 pertaining to the parish of Tre-lech a'r Betws in Carmarthenshire, show that over these three censal years 25, 20 and 23 per cent respectively of farms were in the occupancy of female heads of household; of these 71, 77 and 64 per cent were widows and 66, 70 and 57 per cent were aged fifty and over. [90] Even ownership did not denote total authority, however, for there might be limits to the extent of the widow's power, given that a husband's control, as defined in his will, could extend beyond the grave. Whilst, invariably, a widow's position would be secured, not all would have enjoyed a totally free rein to run and dispose of the holding as they wished. Some were bound by restrictions ensuring that future ownership of the property passed to their husbands' offspring. In

1806, Sarah Hurlow, of Jeffreston, Pembrokeshire, inherited the property of her husband, Benjamin, on condition she kept a home for his two daughters, who were, in turn, expected to work the holding as long as they were able. By the conditions of her husband's will, Sarah was denied her right to bequeath the property.[91] Concern that a family property might, on the widow's re-marriage, convert to the ownership of another man, prompted some husbands to stipulate the forfeiture of any rights should this happen. In the aforementioned Sarah's case, it was pointedly stipulated in her husband's will that, in the eventuality of her remarriage, she could expect to get one shilling only from his estate, the residue going directly to their children. Likewise, widow Elizabeth Cole was to relinquish control of her inherited property in favour of her two children, should she marry again.[92] In other cases a widow's control might be diluted by a stipulation that she inherit the property jointly with an offspring from the marriage. Catherine Melchior was left one hundred pounds in cash, but her husband's land became hers to manage only until their son reached his majority at twenty-one, after which she was to relinquish to him a half share of the property in joint ownership.[93]

Notwithstanding the occasional imposition of limiting conditions, many wives did gain significant rights when widowed, whether the farm was owned outright or merely tenanted. Despite tenancy agreements on many estates prevailing towards leases of seven, fourteen and twenty-one years and even annual agreements, the older three-lives lease, where family members succeeded one another, continued to run. In Corsygedol, in Merioneth, for instance, Richard Moore-Colyer writes that so regularly did widows succeed their husbands, as well, of course, as sons follow fathers, that it had become almost a custom. On the Gogerddan estate in Cardiganshire, Anne James took over the tenancy of the family farm for five years after the death of her husband in 1808.[94] Whether freeholder or tenant, restricted in their ultimate power to run

their holding or not, it cannot be denied that many farming widows sought, and achieved, positions of considerable power and influence inside their respective families and within their own communities. From looking at the wills drawn up by women in Cardiganshire in the early modern period, Gerald Morgan has concluded that: "women of fortune, family and character could play important roles in the society and marital lives of their families and were therefore people of consequence at the highest level of local society".[95] It was a tradition which continued throughout the nineteenth century. An indication of the extent of the power and control exerted by strong-minded widows in the face of opposition, whether from tenants, Church or parish, can be found in the subsequent chapter on public lives.

Cottage wives

Compared to the modicum of financial buttressing and security that some, albeit not all, family farms offered its occupants, a cottage family tottered constantly on the edge of an economic abyss. In terms of sheer survival, the commitment of family members was critical, and for the cottager's wife necessitated her unstinted and wholesale co-operation and active support. On a broader scale, by actively contributing to its workforce, she helped to uphold and enhance the rural economy.

The circumstances for most cottage wives in the Welsh countryside were determined largely by the employment and working conditions of their labouring husbands. Many found themselves beholden to their husband's employer. Directly linked to the land, most labouring families' livelihoods and prosperity were heavily reliant on agricultural work and, for considerable numbers, being "bound" to manual labour on a particular farm provided the means whereby they were able to set up a home. Within the pattern of land occupancy of south-west

Wales, many farms, even those small in size, contained one or more cottages, some coming with a few acres, which would be sub-let by the tenant farmer to house labourers and their families, on the condition that they worked on the farm to which the cottage was attached. "Bound" in this way, it was understood that the cottager labourered for the farmer, while his wife, along with other family members, would tend the small holding and at various times in the agricultural calendar, most notably during the critical period of the harvest, work for the farmer.[96] Depending thus for survival on the close accessibility of farm work or associated employment, and with it the chance of accommodation, cottagers became inextricably tied to farming families within whose boundaries they lived and worked. In this sense, we can utilise a well-used concept to speak of the moral economy of the farm in south-west Wales.

Besides committing themselves to work in the harvest during the summer months, there were, for cottage wives dependant on their husbands' earnings to provide the means for sustenance, important implications attached to the bound family. Restricted in finding alternative work by the terms of his let, a labourer's time was prioritised to the requirements of his landlord in carrying out a workload which was not always assured except for harvest time and heavily contingent on prevailing weather conditions. This was a difficult situtation at best for cottage wives "bound" to this arrangement, for the uncertainty of income could be critical. [97] At the parish of St. Ishmael in the 1890s, "bound" agricultural labourers worked at various farms in the vicinity for 2s. 6d. a day, but days lost, due to inclement weather, especially during the winter, meant that the amount of pay awarded fluctuated week by week. During the harvest, however, they remained attached to one place, and earnings could top 15s. to 15s. 6d. a week with their food.[98] Under this "bound" tenant system, wives were expected to work in addition to their husbands if required, and in so doing they could once again find themselves unfairly

disadvantaged. On one farm, at St Ishmael, they were expected to work on their landlord's farm, doing hoeing and general harvesting, for 8d. a day, while other women, not tied in this way, received 10d. and 1s. a day for the same work. [99]

Problems of fluctuating work and uncertain income due to weather, lack of employment and seasonal slump did not just affect bound cottagers and their families of course, but were endemic to all Welsh rural labourers and their families. Even when wages were earned, the method of payment often served to work against the interests of the cottage wife and her children, for the custom of giving labourers meals in the farmhouse, in lieu of money, considerably diminished the family income.[100]

To some extent the hardship experienced on account of small wages and insecurity of income was offset by a number of concessions made by farmers to their local cottagers which, by way of recriprocity, were paid for by the labour power of the wives and children. Central to the domestic economy of cottage families in south-west Wales was the cultivation of potato ground, whereby a local farmer would apportion a part of his land for the use of agricultural labourers' families and other cottagers living in the neighbourhood to grow potatoes. [101] Again, the cottage wife's participation was vital, for not only did she help cultivate the ground, plant the seed, hoe and harvest the crops, but also worked in the farmer's fields at harvest time, as was the custom, to repay any manure which he had supplied.[102] Although different localities might vary slightly in the number of working days required, generally a day's labour was regarded as sufficient payment for the delivery of a cart load of manure. A cottage wife would thus be expected to work anything between a week and a fortnight. The wives of labourers working for R. D. Jenkins, a landowner of St. Dogmaels in south Cardiganshire, for instance, were expected to work between six and eight days at harvest time in return for a similar number of carts loads of

manure. [103] Any other favours given by the farmer, including perhaps the loan of a team of horses for hay making, carting or ploughing, would have to be similarly returned, as were awards of "free" firewood or "free" grazing. All would be paid for by the work of the cottage wife and her children during the critical harvest months. [104]

Besides tending the potato ground to ensure a fruitful crop in the autumn, the cottage wife's responsibilities extended to caring for the family pig, without doubt the most important animal in the cottage economy of the British farm labourer in general, as, for instance, in Oxfordshire, where the pig's importance is vividly described in Flora Thompson's *Larkrise to Candleford.* Most cottagers in south-west Wales regularly kept a pig which they would fatten to later butcher and sell, the money derived from its sale usually going to pay the rent on the holding.[105] Such was the importance of the pig to the labouring population, that the large numbers of people congregated at the pig section of the Llanelli fair of June 1865, were there, according to the *Llanelli and County Guardian* covering the event, for the purpose of securing as much money as they could for their pigs, in readiness for the imminent rent day which was looming close.[106] Called the "walking investment" or a "live savings bank" on account of its pre-eminence, responsibility for the animal's well-being rested on administrations of the cottager's wife and her children.[107] Roaming freely during the day, the pig would be fed out of a bucket, perhaps seven or eight times a day at or near the cottage door. During the summer months the refuse from the garden might be boiled and mixed with bran sieved from oatmeal and barley. [108]

In addition to the above tasks, cottage wives would scour the surrounding countryside for anything that could be utilised as food or items for the household. Kindling for the fire might be collected from the nearby coppice wood and all the family clothes were made, altered and

handed down.[109] A further contribution to the family's slender resources came from the activity of cottage wives in taking advantage of the customary rights to glean on the harvested fields after the crops had been gathered in.[110] At shearing time, in early summer, it was also the custom of some women living near upland sheep-rearing areas to gather up the sheep's wool that had been left on the mountains. Going together in groups, and taking their food and bedclothes, they would be gone for a few days, sheltering overnight in cattle barns on the upland slopes.[111] By following the sheep trails, and gathering every scrap of wool from grassland, hedges, gorse and bushes, up to two to four pounds of wool a day could be collected.[112] Again, village women in Freystrop and Hook in Pembrokeshire established their own specialised cottage industry whereby they gathered hazel and willow branches to supply the coal mines bordering the Cleddau with its roof supports.[113] As final examples, in the upland areas of Cardiganshire, lichen was collected from mountain rock and sold as a dye for military garments to dealers in Aberystwyth, while elsewhere furze pods were picked and dried for their seeds. [114]

Keen to augment the family's income, cottage wives utilised every opportunity that presented itself to earn cash or goods in kind. Enterprising and resourceful, they bartered and traded whatever they could muster. Even up until the late nineteenth century, Pembrokeshire colliers' wives regularly headed towards Haverfordwest, leading donkeys loaded up with numerous canvas bags crammed with culm, the latter which, by dint of using "wonderful powers of persuasion", they would offer to potential customers on the way.[115] It was very often the wife's responsibility for trading and selling. The wife of David Edwards, a hatter of Amlwch in Anglesey, was apparently well known throughout Wales, for it was she who travelled the country plying her husband's hats.[116] Sometimes wives toiled alongside their husbands in a working partnership. One such family was seen on the road six miles from Aberystwyth, loaded with

panniers of peat which they had cut from the surrounding moorland and which they intended to sell at the coast. The husband's load was estimated as weighing about sixty pounds, while his wife's and daughters' were thought to be somewhat less, but were no less cumbersome. When reckoning the worth of the panniers, it was estimated that it barely covered what would normally be the transportation costs, let alone the price of the peat and the time and effort taken to cut it.[117]

Where cottages were located near pockets of population, such as in the vicinity of towns, occupiers were quick to take advantage of the ready market they were afforded by cultivating their patches of land. Vegetables and fruit grown in the cottage gardens would be carried by cottage wives in baskets to be sold either in the local market or by hawking the produce around the streets, from house to house, in doing so often acquiring a network of regular customers.[118] While more scope for subsistence and trade was gained by having land attached to the cottage, even without these means, cottagers might keep poultry. In the last few decades of the nineteenth century, and probably earlier, Pembrokeshire cottage wives were said to keep a few chickens which they would sell to travelling higglers. Cottagers at Maenclochog in north Pembrokeshire, who kept cows and poultry, sold their butter and eggs to the local shopkeeper, who would then send the produce to the Rhondda valley for re-sale.[119] It was reported in the 1890s that at Llanboidy in Carmarthenshire although only one in ten labourers kept cows, their wives generally kept chickens, the proceeds from which, allied with the sale of eggs, brought them a good income.[120] The income derived from the sale of poultry, eggs and pigs could contribute substantially to a household budget. A close examination of the Poor Inquiry data for twenty-two counties in Ireland, for instance, for the earlier years of 1835-6, reveals that women reared pigs and poultry, the income from which could amount to fifteen to twenty per cent of the

family income when a husband was regularly employed and more than thirty per cent when he was not.[121]

Of vital importance to the cottage economy we have seen earlier, until mechanisation facilitated mass production, was the woollen trade. For the first half of the nineteenth century at least, a cottage wife's time was engaged in the labour-intensive task of knitting woollens and gloves. Cardiganshire cottage women and their daughters were said to be almost totally pre-occupied with the task, and in north Wales, in times of unemployment when the proceeds from knitting became the principal income, whole families, including the men-folk, would assist their wives and daughters.[122] Domestic manufacture of this kind was greatly encouraged from the later eighteenth century by newly formed county agricultural societies intent on furthering habits of thrift and industry amongst tenants and cottagers alike. For cottage wives and their children prizes were offered to those who produced the most and best quality cloth and yarn and stockings in their own homes.[123] Such measures came highly commended by observers who applauded the award of premiums and the provision of extra markets as encouraging habits of industry and stimulating enterprise. The resultant increase in production, for which the essential role of wives and daughters was acknowledged, was thought of material benefit. As Malkin recognised when writing in 1804: "Thus the condition of the lower classes have [*sic*] been improved, parishes considered relieved from excessive poor rates, habits of industry excited and established among the wives and daughters of the labouring poor." [124]

Other means of augmenting family income included the fostering of illegitimate children, either by private arrangement with the mother or paid for out of parish funds. In the absence of legislation concerning childcare, women accepted children into their often already overcrowded cottages, believing no doubt, that one, or more, extra child would not matter. This was certainly

the case with cottager William Morris' wife, who, as well as bringing up sixteen children of her own, in their cramped one-roomed, mud-floored cottage, had, over a number of years, also nursed ten illegitimate children.[125] Moreover, besides paying off the potato debt at harvest-time when labour needs were greatest, labourers, their wives and children gained extra income during this busy season by helping at neighbouring farms.[126] We have seen earlier that in order to release mothers for the harvest, small children might be taken to the farmhouse to be fed and looked after during the day.[127] When children accompanied their mothers to the fields they were often kept quiet by being sedated with opium, in the form of paregoric, dosed with quantities of rum or what was called "sleepy beer", a drink made by boiling a poppy capsule in treacle and water (remedies used in the industrial valleys of Wales and no doubt brought from the countryside), while their mothers worked.[128] In Cardiganshire in the early 1800s, in addition to the 3d. they earned, women would be given food, perhaps a piece of bread, some cheese and butter by the farmer or, more probably, his wife. This food allowance would be taken home and used to feed the family on the following day (swpper adref), and this pattern would be repeated for the duration of the harvest. [129]

Often at odds with the cottage wife's work and income-making activities, however, was what was considered her "proper" role within the domestic sphere. One Cardiganshire peat cutter's wife explained the difficulties she experienced in augmenting her husband's irregular, weather-dependant weekly earnings which fluctuated between 3s. to 4s and 6s. Keeping a leased cow and a few sheep, she knitted at home with the help of her two eldest children, aged five and seven. If left uninterrupted, she reckoned to provide an extra 5d. a day, but readily acknowledged that her household responsibilities and childcare left her little time for knitting.[130] Time-consuming and laborious, even simple, everyday tasks around the cottage took much in

terms of effort and energy. Without the conveniences of household water in ready supply, cottage wives were faced with the arduous task of fetching water from conduits and wells often located considerable distances from their homes. In times of drought and water shortages, longer journeys would be made. Contemporary reports record the dry summer of 1864, where women living at Sea-Side, in Llanelli, were forced to travel miles to fetch water. In the frustrating jostling and shoving that accompanied the competition for what supplies could be had, it was said they broke the very pitchers that were to be filled. [131] Even under normal circumstances considerable efforts had to be made to complete tasks which involved large quantities of water. Washdays, which involved hauling cumbersome bundles of dirty washing and scrubbing utensils to the nearest water source, were rendered only slightly less arduous by being turned into social occasions. The quaint and colourful sight observed by one traveller as he made his way towards the river Towy of a group of women, together with the tubs, barrels and pans they had carried, congregating by a stream where they intended, in this instance, to make beer, somewhat belies the exhausting time-consuming and labour-intensive work that the task entailed. Making firstly a fire in order to boil water over an iron tripod, the women would next soak the wort, whereupon they then added yeast, eventually filling the fermenting liquor into casks.[132]

Having to provide their families' clothes, cottage women were described by contemporaries as "frugal, cleanly and industrious", well skilled in the making of coarse cloth, but, not surprisingly, unused to fine needlework.[133] Just as agricultural societies presented premiums to cottage industry, so too were cottagers and their wives rewarded for their particular thrift and good husbandry with regard to their family's appearance. Hence the Proclamation Society of Carmarthen awarded Margaret Arthur, of the parish of Llanegwad, one guinea for

keeping her husband's, her own and her four children's clothes always neatly darned and mended. [134]

In line with prevailing thoughts on what constituted a suitable role for women, cottage wives came under considerable pressure to conform to the womanly ideal of domesticity and nurture to the exclusion of outdoor work opportunities. It was thought that a husband's wages should be enough to enable his wife to stay at home, in what was considered her rightful place looking after her family. Whilst women's outdoor work had been necessary to augment a household's income, it was thought that the higher wages paid to farm labourers in the second half of the nineteenth century would diminish this need. In the words of one commentator: "Necessity no longer drives his wife and children to labour in the fields."[135] Although work of a piecemeal and domestic nature within the confines of her home was not objected to, and even encouraged, cottage wives came under increasing censure for leaving the home and especially their children.[136] The blame for many childhood accidents fell on the shoulders of mothers, who were criticized for spending too much time working in agriculture or gossiping with neighbours at the expense of concentrating on their domestic duties.[137] The greatest opportunity for censure came with the numerous and tragic incidents in which children were injured, usually fatally, by open fires and scalding pots whilst at home and being cared for by elder siblings. While some measure of blame was apportioned to the lack of fireguards or the type of cloth used for children's clothing, cotton and calico being condemned as far more inflammable than traditional flannel, pressure was largely brought to bear on mothers.[138] Holding them responsible for neglect, a censorious press, reflecting dominant opinion, issued such editorial comments as "great blame is attached to the mother for her incautious conduct".[139] In their eagerness to accuse and denounce, commentators failed to comprehend the practical realities of the cottage

woman's life with its underlying ingredients of poverty and loneliness, factors which dictated her actions.

The ideal of the family wage for workers, so approved by middle-class observers, was a myth in nineteenth-century land-starved rural Wales. Although it was intimated that fewer women went out to work within the Llandovery Union in Carmarthenshire than did their counterparts living in the Narberth Union in Pembrokeshire because their husbands' wages were one shilling a week higher, and while observers saw a general improvement in the condition of labourers and their families' lives, the stark reality was that the agricultural labourer's wage remained so meagre that it was woefully insufficient to support a family.[140] The standard of living for cottage families remained low throughout the nineteenth century and wives had the greatest difficulty in providing even the bare necessities of life on the wages received by their husbands. Annual household budgets of four Merioneth and Denbighshire labourers in 1788 glaringly revealed the insufficient income earned by family members, including wife and children, as compared with their outgoing expenses. Failing dismally to balance, the resultant deficit ranged between 19 to 27 per cent.[141] The Cardiganshire labourer in mid-nineteenth century earned only £11 14s. a year, or just 4s.6d a week, which, even with the extra cash helping to swell the family income brought by knitting, was hardly enough for them to live on. It was said that their fare "continued of the poorest and their lot of the hardest".[142] Agricultural labouring families in the parish of Llandingad, north Carmarthenshire, in the late 1840s appeared slightly more solvent by managing on a weekly wage of approximately 9s., but still this had to be augmented by an additional 4s. earned by the wife.[143] The low wages afforded the agricultural labourer prevented the family budget being balanced without, as Anne Digby writes, "continuous struggle and a fair measure of good fortune".[144]

Many wives were indeed left to manage their households single-handedly while their husbands travelled in search of harvest work and extra wages. Ruth Jones recalls her father leaving home to work at the harvest in Herefordshire and how the family looked forward to his return, for he would always bring back with him a big basket of apples and other goods. What was more important for the family, however, was that he returned with wages to hand over to her mother, so that she could budget the finances, and spend any extra money that there might have been left over on household necessities. For the children of the house, there was a strong hope that they would get new clothes or shoes.[145] However exciting the anticipation of a husband or father's return, however, his absence, sometimes stretching over a number of months or even years, involved a great deal of hardship and extra work for those left behind. In the 1830s, it was said that many families were left destitute.[146] This seasonal migration by menfolk in search of work was, of course, matched by European peasantries, those from the Pyrenees, for instance, leaving home to find labour in Spain or Bordeaux.[147]

The actual degree of hardship experienced by the cottage family was determined to a large extent by their situation in the life cycle. Whilst constantly struggling to manage, the greatest financial burdens occurred when there were dependants, mainly young children. While the tasks of the cottage wife lessened to some extent as her children grew older and more capable of assisting with childcare and animals, the burden of their upkeep was not eased until their departure to enter service, after which, not only did the drain on the cottager's resources lessen, but opportunities became available for additional income, commonly in the form of wages sent home.[148] Although, as seen in a later chapter on marriage, the often substantial amounts saved by some female servants cast doubt as to the generality of this practice, nevertheless familial ties would have proved strong, especially in times of hardship. When servant Sarah Richards'

mother fell ill, for instance, she had a guinea deducted out of her wages for the year 1813-1814 to pay the sick woman's rent.[149]

Cottage wives continued to juggle with the family's income to keep the family solvent. It was an almost impossible task even when they subsisted by eating the poorest quality food and living with the most basic of necessities. When they worked regularly, it was estimated for the Narberth Union in Pembrokeshire that besides the free labour given in the harvest to repay the potato ground, women could not expect to have paid work for more than two hundred days a year and, taking into account the part payment in meals, the most they could expect to contribute to the family purse was 8d. a day for two hundred days, thus giving a total of £6 13s. 4d. a year.[150] Women became placed in the unenviable position where they were condemned for going to work outside the home, but could not actually afford to do otherwise.

Facing this awkward dilemma, yet ever mindful of the perceived wisdom of women's rightful domestic role, reformers examining the condition of the rural workforce, and women in particular, searched for solutions which could be applied to the Principality. Recognising that women were useful and economical members of the agricultural workforce, it was suggested that wives should start work no earlier than half past eight in the morning and finish in the evening in time to arrive home at half past five in order to care for their families. By having some time in the evening together, family members would thus enjoy "happier homes".[151] Another suggestion came from an example set by English cottagers in north Derbyshire. Harking to the real (or supposed) comforts said to exist in labouring homes there, it was advocated that a similar example be adopted in Wales. Central to the well-being of the Derbyshire families was the wife, who, rather than being employed in fieldwork at a neighbouring farm, worked, instead, at home, dividing her time between caring for the family's cows in the family's few acres, and looking

after her family, the cottage and clothes. By concentrating her efforts on providing home comforts and good wholesome food it was thought the Welsh cottage wife would raise children to become healthy and strong workers who would later come to emulate their mother's industriousness.[152] Seen only in terms of domesticity, the cottage woman's role as a joint provider to her family was questioned, held up for censure and ultimately diminished.

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1 Vaughan, *Welsh Proverbs with English Translations*, no. 388, p.55.
2 P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.49.
3 Ibid., p.44. According to the evidence of Mr. John Davies, a solicitor and land agent, the school attendance of the smaller farmers' and labourers' children rarely extended over three months in a year, and this in winter.
4 Robert Smith, *Schools, politics and society: elementary education in Wales, 1870-1902* (Cardiff, 1999), p. 6.
5 P.P., 1847, XXV11, *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, p.287.
6 Ibid., pp.235-6.
7 Ibid., p.16.
8 Ibid., pp.20, 41.
9 Ibid., p.52; Sunday schools were heavily criticised for their narrowness of focus.
10 P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.113.
11 *Pembrokeshire Herald,* 13 January 1860.
12 Read, "Prize Report on the Farming of South Wales", p.164.
13 *C.J.*, 6 October 1848; Pamela Horn, *Education in Rural England 1800-1914* (Dublin, 1978), p.117.
14 *Cambrian,* 26 January 1822.
15 *C.J.*, 17 May 1867.
16 Simone Clark, "The Construction of Genteel Sensibilities : the socialisation of daughters of the gentry in seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century Wales", in Sandra Betts, (ed.), *Our daughters' land: past and present* (Cardiff, 1996), p.62.
17 David W. Howell, "The Landed Gentry of Pembrokeshire in the Eighteenth Century" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Wales, 1965), pp.182-3.

[18] L.A.Tilly and J.W. Scott, *Women Work and the Family* (New York, 1978), p.12. For twentieth-century farm women in Wales, see Shan Ashton, "The farmer needs a wife: farm women in Wales", in Jane Aaron et al., (eds.), *Our sisters' land: the changing identities of women in Wales* (Cardiff, 1994), pp.122-139. Ashton maintains that recent calls for farm diversification to help halt the decline in agricultural incomes have failed to acknowledge that farm wives have traditionally generated income towards their family holding.

[19] L.A.Tilly and J.W. Scott, *Women Work and the Family*, p.12.

[20] N.L.W. MS. 87: Chancellor John Fisher, "An Address on Old Welsh Marriage Customs", delivered in 1916.

[21] Similar situations existed in both nineteenth-century Ireland and the more remote areas of rural Lancashire. When comparing both places Michael Anderson found that, in large part, subsistence was derived from land worked as a family unit providing its own labour. See Michael Anderson, *Family structure in nineteenth century Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1971), pp.79-98.

[22] Joan Scott and Louise Tilly, "Women's work and the family in nineteenth-century Europe", in Elizabeth Whitelegg et al., (eds.), *The Changing Experience of Women* (Oxford, 1982), p.51.

[23] Revd. John Evans, *A Tour Through North Wales* (London, 1804), p.55.

[24] Bridget Hill, *Women, work and sexual politics in eighteenth-century England* (Oxford, 1989), p.38.

[25] Scott and Tilly, "Women's work and the family in nineteenth-century Europe", p.52.

[26] C. Thomas, "Rural Society in Nineteenth-Century Wales : South Cardiganshire in 1851", *Ceredigion*, 6 (1968-71), p.403.

[27] See, for instance, Roy Nash, "Family and economic structure in nineteenth-century Wales : Llangernyw and Gwytherin in 1871", *The Welsh History Review*, 11, 2 (1982), p.138.

[28] For the meaning of kinship to the inhabitants of south-west Wales, read the chapter on kinship in Jenkins, *The agricultural community in south-west Wales*, pp.157-178.

[29] Anderson, *Family structure in nineteenth century Lancashire*, p.90.

[30] Ibid., p.89.

[31] Roderick Phillips, *Putting Asunder: a history of divorce in Western society* (Cambridge, 1988), pp.367-369.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Howell, *Land and People*, p.93.

[34] See the comparison between the description in N.L.W. MS: Thomas John Masleni, *A sketch of a tour and of scenery in Wales* and Catherine Sinclair, *Hill and Valley or Wales and the Welsh* (1839), p.264 and the following accounts far less fulsome in praise.

[35] N.L.W. MS., 1759B11: Walter Davies, Notes Taken during Journeys for the Board of Agriculture; P.P., 1847, XXV11, *Reports of the Commissions of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, p.56. These cottages continued to be used at least down to the first decades of the twentieth century in parts of south-west Wales. Some of the worst were said to exist in the Aberaeron district of Cardiganshire. P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.22.

[36] P.P., 1865, XXV1, *Seventh ARMOHPC for 1864*, Appendix 1X, p.499.

[37] P.P.,.1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, p.693.

[38] Ibid., p.702.

[39] Ibid., p.639.

[40] *Haverfordwest and Milford Haven Telegraph,* 15 December 1858: see also Thomas Roscoe, *Wandering and Excursions in South Wales* (London, 18uu), p.39.

[41] P.P., 1894, XXXV, *Royal Commission on Agriculture*: Final Report of Mr. Little.

[42] P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, p.703.

[43] *Cambrian*, 29 January 1814.

[44] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.119.

[45] Roscoe, *Wanderings and Excursions in South Wales*, p.40.

[46] P.P., 1847, XXV11, *Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, pp.21, 237; for adverse reports, see p.56 of the same commission.
[47] From a correspondent named "One who held the Plough", to the Editor of the *Carmarthen Journal* regarding the State and Condition of Farmers and Farming in some parts of South Wales. *C.J.*, 26 September 1845. Such nicknames referred to their respective farms.
[48] Vaughan, *Welsh Proverbs with English Translations*, no. 498, p.70.
[49] P.P., 1882, XV, Mr. Doyle's report, 8; for a description of Cardiganshire, see P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.46.
[50] P.P., 1882, XV, Mr.Doyle's report, p.8.
[51] P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission*, p.607.
[52] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.114.
[53] Jenkins, "Rural Industry in Cardiganshire", p.90.
[54] Information supplied by Mrs. Gwyneth Bevan of Gower.
[55] N.L.W. Glyneiddan 93: "Farming in the Vale of Towy", pp.137-138.
[56] D. Parry Jones, *Welsh country upbringing* (London, 1948), p.74.
[57] Two farm servants produced specimens of bread and porridge before magistrates at Rhoose (Pembrokeshire) Petty Sessions as proof of the poor quality of food they were given to eat. As a result they were allowed to leave their service while their employer became liable for the costs of the action, *C.J.*, 20 February 1863.
[58] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.61.
[59] P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, pp.636-637.
[60] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.48.
[61] *C.J.*, 26 August 1859.
[62] Leonore Davidoff, "The role of gender in the first industrial nation: agriculture in England 1780-1850", in R. Crompton and M.Mann, (eds.), *Gender and Stratification* (Cambridge, 1986), pp.206-207.
[63] Roscoe, *Wanderings and Excursions in South Wales*, p.31; see also Mary Curtis, *The Antiquities of Laugharne, Pendine and Their Neighbourhoods* (London, 1880), p.16, where she describes market days in Laugharne in the late 1820s and 1830s.
[64] *C.J.*, 6 June 1862.
[65] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, pp. 49-50.
[66] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.45.
[67] Tibbott, "Cheese-making in Glamorgan", p.66.
[68] P.P., 1847, XXV11, *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, p.236.
[69] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.50.
[70] Ibid., p.103.
[71] N.L.W. Diocese of St. David's Parochial Records, Llangrannog, 19, records the lengthy correspondence that was entered into during the Easter of 1857 by Miss Jordan, a daughter of Pigeonsford, Llangrannog, to the Bishop when one of her servants was refused communion at her local Church.
[72] *C.J.*, 26 January 1855.
[73] Howell, *Patriarchs and Parasites*, p58.
[74] Ibid.,p.54.
[75] C.R.O., Cwmgwili MS. i/232, 7 April, 1787.
[76] J. H. Davies, "The Social Structure and Economy of South-West Wales in the Late Nineteenth-Century" (unpublished M.A.thesis, University of Wales, 1967), p.57.
[77] B.G. Charles, "The Highmead Dairy, 1778-1797", *Ceredigion*, 5, (1964-67), p.76.
[78] Hugh Evans, *The Gorse Glen*, a translation by E. Morgan Humphreys of the Welsh *Cwm Eithin* (Liverpool, 1948), p.14. Olwen Hufton, citing this example, makes a similar point in *The Prospect Before Her*, pp.155-156. See also N.G. Osterud, "She helped Me Hay It as Good as a Man : Relations

among Women and Men in an Agricultural Community", in C. Groneman and M.B. Norton, (eds.), *"To Toil the Lifelong Day", America's Women at Work, 1780-1980* (New York, London, 1987), p.93.

[79] Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, p.66.

[80] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.10.

[81] Parry-Jones, *Welsh country upbringing*, pp.73-74.

[82] P.P. , 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, p.605.

[83] Davidoff, "The role of gender in the first industrial nation", pp.190-213; Nicola Verdon emphasises that not all English farmers' wives retreated from work on the farm for much depended on status and locale. Even where they were most likely to be distanced from farm business, most notably East Anglia, they still had a degree of input, even if only slight. See Nicola Verdon, " '. . .subjects deserving of the highest praise": farmers' wives and the farm economy in England, c.1700-1850", *Agricultural History Review: a journal of agricultural and rural histo*ry, 51, 1 (2003), pp.23-39.

[84] Richard Jefferies, *Hodge and his Masters*, 2 vols. (London, 1880), pp.217-234.

[85] *C.J.*, 11 November 1864.

[86] Curtis, *The Antiquities of Laugharne*, pp.37-38.

[87] Gibson, *Agriculture in Wales*, pp.7, 33.

[88] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.108.

[89] Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, "'The hidden investment': women and the enterprise", in Pamela Sharpe, (ed.), *Women's Work: The English Experience 1670-1914* (London, 1998), p.240.

[90] Muriel Bowen Evans, "The community and social change in the parish of Tre-lech A'r Betws during the nineteenth- century" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Wales, 1980), pp.139-143.

[91] Muriel Bowen Evans, "The Land and its People", in David W. Howell, (ed.), *Pembrokeshire County History*, Vol. iv, *Modern Pembrokeshire* (Haverfordwest, 1993), p.35.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Richard J. Moore-Colyer, "Some aspects of land occupation in nineteenth-century Cardiganshire", *Trans. Cymmorodorion Soc.* (1981), pp.83-84.

[95] Gerald Morgan, "Women's wills in west Wales, 1600-1750", *Trans. Cymmorodorion Soc.* (1992), p.104.

[96] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, pp.18,54.

[97] P.P., 1893-94, XXXV1, *The Agricultural Labourer*, p.64.

[98] Ibid., p.71.

[99] Ibid.; P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, p.107.

[100] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.122; P.P., 1844, XV1, *Royal Commission of Inquiry for South Wales*, p.239; P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, p.631.

[101] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.61.

[102] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.40.

[103] Ibid., pp.111,115,128,130.

[104] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, pp.49, 60-61. The whole system of the potato plot has been brilliantly recreated by Jenkins, *The agricultural community in south-west Wales.*

[105] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.128.

[106] *Llanelli and County Guardian,* 1 June 1865.

[107] Jennie Kitteringham gives excellent insight into some of the complexities involved in the keeping of a cottage pig, including the practical acceptance needed by cottagers' families at the time of its slaughter. Jennie Kitteringham, "Country work girls in nineteenth-century England", in Raphael Samuel, (ed.), *Village Life and Labour* (London, 1975), pp.75-79.

[108] Read, "Prize Report on the Farming of South Wales", p.141.

[109] P.P., 1847, XXV11, *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, p.234.

[110] J. Ceredig Davies, *Foklore in West and Mid-Wales* (Aberystwyth, 1911), p.82.

[111] Jones, *Atgofion Ruth Mynachlog*, p.22.
[112] W.J. Lewis, "The Condition of Labour in mid Cardiganshire in the Early Nineteenth Century", *Ceredigion*, 1V (1963), p.330.
[113] Price, "The Forgotten Coalfield", pp. 93-94.
[114] N.L.W.MS. 1759 Bii: Walter Davies, Notes taken during Journeys for the Board of Agriculture.
[115] *The Telegraph Almanack* for *1929*.
[116] Gwyn Jenkins, "Felt hatmaking in Ceredigion", *Folk life*, 26 (1987-88), p.49.
[117] Davies, Notes Taken During Journeys for the Board of Agriculture, NLW MS 1759 B1
[118] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, pp.53-54.
[119] P.P., 1893-94, XXXV1, *The Agricultural Labourer*, p. 69.
[120] Ibid., p.68.
[121] The findings of Mary Cullen cited in Anne O'Dowd, "Women in Rural Ireland in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries - How the Daughters, Wives and Sisters of Small Farmers and Landless Labourers Fared", *Rural History*, 5,2 (1994), pp.171.
[122] J. Clark, *The South Wales Itinerary, Being a Guide for the Tourist* (Chepstow, 1853) ; Revd. John Evans, *A Tour Through North Wales* (London, 1804), p.67.
[123] Prys-Jones, *The Story of Carmarthenshire*, p.408.
[124] B.H. Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities and Biography of South Wales* (London, 1807), p.38.
[125] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.153.
[126] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.121. Heavily labour-intensive, some indication of the numbers of hands required in the harvest is given for the vale of Towy, where two waggons were used for gathering hay, each needing three to four men to lift and load. Eight women then came behind with hand rakes to clear up the residue while three women were employed at the hay shed to spread the hay under the supervision of a labourer. See N.L.W., Glyneiddan 93; Farming in the Vale of Towy, pp.135-36.
[127] P.P., 1893-94, XXXV1, *The Agricultural Labourer*, p.72.
[128] P.P., 1865, XXV1, *Seventh ARMOHPC for 1864*, p.507. The concern over the detrimental effects on children by mothers who worked occupied the attention of most Medical Officers of Health at this time, as did infant mortality. See Anthony S. Wohl, *Endangered Lives: public health in Victorian Britain* (London, 1983), pp.25-36.
[129] N.L.W. 1759 Bii, Walter Davies, Notes Taken During Journeys for the Board of Agriculture.
[130] Evans, *Letters written during a tour through South Wales*, p.324.
[131] *C.J.*, 2 September 1864.
[132] Evans, *Letters Written During a Tour Through South Wales*, pp. 211-212.
[133] Read, "Prize Report on the Farming of South Wales", p.149.
[134] *Cambrian*, 22 November 1817.
[135] Rowland Edmund Prothero, *The Land and its People: chapters in rural Life and history* (London, 1925), p.70.
[136] P.P., 1893-94, XXXV1, *The Agricultural Labourer*, p.10.
[137] P.P., 1847, XXV11, *Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, p.109; C.J., 1 May 1846.
[138] *C.J.*, 12 June 1846, 20 November 1846.
[139] *Welshman*, 25 December 1835; *C.J.*, 26 April 1861.
[140] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p. 41; P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, p.631.
[141] David Davies, *Labourers in Husbandry*, pp.188-91, cited by David W. Howell, *The Rural Poor in Eighteenth-Century Wales*, p.75.
[142] P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, p.628.
[143] P.P., 1847, XXV11, *Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, p.234.

[144] Anne Digby, "The Rural Poor", in G.E. Mingay, (ed.), *The Victorian Countryside*, Vol 2 (London, 1981), p.592.

[145] Jones, *Atgofion Ruth Mynachlog*, p.20.

[146] John Williams-Davies, "The seasonal migration of agricultural labour in nineteenth-century Wales" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Wales, 1985), p.215.

[147] Olwen Hufton, "The Rise of the People", in Alfred Cobban, (ed.), *The Eighteenth Century: Europe in the Age of Enlightenement* (London, 1969), p.299.

[148] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, pp. 18,51,128. In early twentieth-century Cardiganshire both male and female servants living on farms were said to have sent the greater part of their income home to help support their families. This did not appear the case in nineteenth-century rural Lancashire, however, see Anderson, *Family structure in nineteenth century Lancashire*, p.75. In Oxfordshire, on the other hand, such a system of help from those gone into service did obtain, as is recorded in Flora Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford*, p 165.

[149] Michael Anderson uses evidence from Durham to suggest that female farm servants were more likely to save for marriage than contribute towards the parental household and this, he maintains, would also apply elsewhere. Anderson, *Family structure in nineteenth century Lancashire*, p.75. At times of family illhealth or incapacity money was sent home, see D. Emrys Williams, "Payment of Farm Servants in the Towy Valley, 1774-1869", *Journal of Royal Welsh Society*, XX1X (1960), p.75.

[150] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.42.

[151] Ibid., p.68.

[152] Ibid., p.17. Other schemes considered beneficial to ensure a healthy labouring workforce included the holding of garden allotments to be cared for by the husband.

3

COPING WITH POVERTY.

"Gwynt a lyf dda gwraig weddw".

The tongue of any wind that moans

Will lap up all a widow owns. [1]

Ann Badger was officially classified in Welsh society as a female pauper, receiving 3s. a week parish relief. A resident of Llangennech, Carmarthenshire, in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, she lived such a niggardly and penny pinching existence, that, for at least seven years, neighbours had regarded her as being near destitute for the want of the basic necessities of life. Over the years, and by some extraordinary means or other, however, Ann had acquired very substantial savings of £100, along with large quantities of marbles, old nails and buttons which she had squirreled away under floorboards and in various other nooks and crannies in her cramped and bare cottage. Her secret only became exposed when her cottage caught alight and rescuers found the hoard. [2] To scrimp and save for years by living a pauper's existence might have been Ann's bizarre method of avoiding total destitution. Perhaps insecurity and the fear of becoming destitute had driven her into such a state of eccentricity and miserliness that she chose to live under the most appalling conditions whilst, at the same time, avidly hoarding whatever she could acquire. In adopting such extreme action, and having the means to do so, no doubt Ann could be thought a rarity. Poverty, and the fear of poverty, however, was, and remained, throughout the period under discussion a constant threat for much of the population of south-west Wales and none more so than for women, who, even more so than men, were, and always had been, especially susceptible to

impoverishment.[3] Fewer employment opportunities, lower wages and responsibilities for child care severely hindered their chances of being immune to the vagaries of economic downturn, scarcity and ill-fortune. Aptly summing up the precarious situation which existed for those at the bottom levels of rural society where she recognises that most women lived, Janet Todd rightly asserts that: "life was a remorseless struggle against poverty, a foraging for food and firewood and an unremitting war against disease and lice". [4] Indeed so narrow was the boundary that separated subsistence from penury, that it was only too easy to slip downwards into a state of insolvency, with its corresponding change of status. Ann, for whatever obscure reason she might have had, chose to live a pauper's existence; for many women, however, poverty was an inevitable fact of life.

It is through the vestry minutes of the poor law, with their detailed lists of those claiming relief, that the extent of female poverty can be best examined. Even a brief scrutiny of those receiving poor relief in the various parishes of south-west Wales swiftly reveals that female poverty was widespread. Women, comprising numerically the most applicants, not surprisingly were proved to be especially vulnerable to times of economic downturns and poverty.[5] In Llanarthney, Carmarthenshire, in 1805, out of the 81 dependant paupers, 43 were female, while out of the 73 families requiring relief in Llanstephan, Carmarthenshire, in 1821, 47 had women listed at their head. Further proof can be seen in the same parish, in 1832, when out of a total 101 paupers listed, 21 were widows, a further 41 were females of unspecified status, 21 were males and 18 comprised children, both children born in wedlock and bastards in even numbers.[6] It also comes then as no surprise to find that a large proportion of women on the parish fund were classified as widows. (Yet again, in the weekly returns for Abergwili, in 1790, we find 26 out of 72 paupers listed as being widows.)[7] It was, indeed, recognized by contemporaries that widows, along with decayed labourers, orphans and those suffering ill health, featured amongst the chronic poor of a community.[8] Here, of

course, it is right to acknowledge that widows figured significantly in the population of south-west Wales as a whole. David Jenkins has estimated, for instance, that in 1861, not counting farmers' households, 64, or 28 per cent, of the 233 households in Troedyraur, south Cardiganshire, were headed by widows or spinsters.[9] Although it would be untrue to state that all widows were poor, for middle-class wives of deceased professional men lived comfortably in the suburbs of the principal towns and many widows ran prosperous agricultural holdings, the proportion of poor widows was nevertheless significantly high.[10]

Along with widows on the list of poor, of course, were also unmarried mothers, the single, the infirm and the elderly. Nor were married women exempt from the prospect of suffering from destitution and want. Some of the poorest families in Carmarthenshire were those of fishermen, who, whilst in the summer months at most eked out a precarious living from fishing the Towy, in the winter were driven to rely on charitable hand-outs and parochial relief to alleviate their poverty. It was said that so miserable was their existence, even the most callous would have pity. [11] Most families, however, were prey to the changing fortunes associated with the life cycle, with prosperity reliant on age, health and the state of dependants. In addition, the family economy, the lifeline maintaining the wellbeing of most of the population in south- west Wales, was, in itself, a "frail edifice", [12] its success balanced precariously on the premise that all its members contributed in some measure to its furtherance. Any breakdown in its efficient running could quickly result in poverty and destitution for the family, and especially so for wives, for whom, with their child-caring responsibilities and lower earning capacity, we have stressed, mobility was difficult. Without the benefit of a male wage, whether due to ill health, unemployment, or desertion, a married woman could easily be forced into penury, having to rely purely on what she and, if applicable, her children could earn, topped up by charitable handouts and poor relief. [13]

What were the choices open to women to save themselves from a future of poverty and degradation? What devices did they employ in their attempts to remain solvent? If sinking to depths of penury, what means were available to them, both within the community, and beyond, to ward against starvation and help them recover some modicum of self-sufficiency? What actions could women employ to survive in such circumstances and how effective were they?

In keeping with the prevailing philosophy of self–help, those amongst the more provident in regular employment sought insurance against future poverty by seeking membership of a self-help organisation, or friendly society. Designed to safeguard the subscriber against the misfortunes of ill heath and unemployment, a host of these neighbourhood and village-based societies had sprung up in Wales during the last third of the eighteenth century. Suffering fluctuating fortunes down to the 1790s, they grew in popularity with the passing of Mr. Pitt's "Act for the Encouragement and Relief of Friendly Societies" in 1793, and continued expanding, until by 1870 total membership in the Principality alone had peaked to more than half a million. [14] Although less numerous by far than their male counterparts, female societies became established, usually in the aftermath of the formation of a men's club. Catering to the needs of their female subscribers for independence and self-protection, membership was similar to that of the corresponding male societies, and involved paying a fixed amount regularly into a common fund that could then be utilised for mutual benefit to provide cover against ill health, permanent incapacity and death, depending on the rules laid down by the society.[15] Typical was the Friendly Society at Aberaeron, Cardiganshire, formed in 1801. The society was arranged around meetings held every two months, when members would contribute one shilling into the collection box and one penny for the ale that would be consumed during the evening. (The influence of non-conformity with its emphasis on temperance saw alcohol give way to tea) While only accepting those in

perfect health and aged under 40 years, each new member was to pay one shilling to be admitted into the fund, with the fee increasing commensurate with the amount of funds in the box. In return, members could be assured of monetary aid at certain times of hardship. If unable to work due to illness, for instance, a member was to receive 3s. 6d. per week, incurables or permanent invalids were allowed 2d. a week for life, and an allowance of 30s. was to be awarded towards funeral expenses. In addition, deceased members of over five years' standing would be awarded a pension, to be paid to their next of kin, the amount depending on the state of the fund. [16]

There was no scarcity of subscribers to these societies. Such was the high demand for membership in Llandovery, Carmarthenshire, at the turn of the eighteenth century, that the Reputable Female Society set up in the town in 1794, meeting at the Nag's Head public house, was only one of three female societies established there at the time. With an overall membership exceeding 100, some thrifty and provident women paid subscriptions to all three societies, whilst many, it was said, were members of two. [17] In 1811, out of the nine or ten friendly societies in Llandovery, four or five, it was said, were female.[18] Female membership peaked in the 1840s and 1850s, when it has been estimated that around 20,000 women (roughly one in five) in Wales belonged to both registered and unregistered societies. Female membership, in marked contrast with their male counterparts, thereafter declined, dropping from a ratio of 1 : 7 in 1800 to 1 : 25 by 1876. [19] The fall was most notable in the industrial parts of Wales, where, presumably, the ethos of the "family wage" was most pronounced and less women were employed in paid labour. By the latter decades of the nineteenth century, while not coming strictly within the boundaries of insurance, the preferred method of ensuring future prosperity, at least amongst servant girls, even more so than their male counterparts, was the more individualistic method of self-help, that is, of holding an account in the Post Office savings bank. [20]

For a married woman, protection against poverty might be afforded by a husband's affiliation to a benefit club. For the occasional, more fortunate widow, some measure of private relief could be gained through her deceased husband's previous contributions, whereby a level of financial help was ensured through payment of a pension to dependants upon his death. Not all societies, however, carried this commitment, and even when they did, there was a danger that they would not be totally honourable in fulfilling the terms of their agreements. Widows, unaware of their entitlements, or the regulations surrounding the awards, could easily be tricked out of their rightful dues, for it was not unknown for unscrupulous officials to conveniently bend the rules for the benefit of those members still living, rather than for the dependants of those who had passed away. When Jane Morgan's husband died, for instance, she was confident in the knowledge that he had, for years, subscribed into his particular club and, at the time of his death, was a fully paid-up member. Instead, she found herself at the centre of a dispute on technicalities, for while officials agreed that she should receive a £2 lump sum at her husband's death, they refused to pay her the additional £6 to which she was entitled through the deceased's contributions having exceeded £120. Forced to lodge a complaint against the stewards of the club, her case was heard before the Bench at Carmarthen Town Hall and a judgement made in her favour. [21]

While providing some degree of security against hardship induced by sickness, unemployment or death of a partner, benefit societies, whether for males or females, were far from being the panacea for combating poverty in Welsh rural society. Short-lived (at least as far as female membership was concerned), governed by strict rules of entry, often insecure, and niggardly in their awards, such benefits as there were would have been variable in value and, anyway, would have only concerned a small percentage of females, and certainly not the poor.[22] It is my contention that for most women, whether in possession of insurance, or, as

more likely, without, the reality of life stood for a remorseless round of drudgery centred on making ends meet.

It has been argued that in comparison to the more village-bound agrarian areas of the south and east of England there was more scope for independence for the single woman in Wales and the north and west of England, as cottages in these areas often came with small plots of land.[23] This was no doubt the case, but, nevertheless, in times of poor harvests and high prices, the same conditions would apply to all. Like all sections of society who lived on the margins of destitution, widows, spinsters and those without a partner were amongst the hardest hit in times of recession and scarcity. As has been stressed in the foregoing pages, women were not only more limited in choice of occupation, but were paid significantly less than their male counterparts, who, moreover, were less hampered by considerations of family and childcare, both issues which greatly restricted a woman's movements. Despite certain occupations not considered seemly or respectable, without a partner to buttress a living wage women often had no option but to take whatever low, menial and unseemly tasks they could do, in order to survive. It was no coincidence, that in Caernarfonshire, where scarcely any women worked in the fields, the few who did were classified as "old maids" or widows. [24] For the educated widow, teaching was a real alternative to starving. The expanding demand for education, in the shape of boarding schools, presented opportunities for those who had a respectable home but not a sufficient income to survive. One advertisement in the *Carmarthen Journal*, written by a respectable widow, asked for two or three young ladies to board and receive an education for moderate terms, along with her own daughter. [25]

When casual work dried up, they would be thrown back upon their own resources in order to survive as best they could. In the depression of 1852, the squire of Cilgwyn in south Cardiganshire correctly summed up the desperate predicament of one local miner's widow, calling it "precarious". In her position, unable to find work with neighbouring farmers, who

themselves had to budget and pare their needs to avoid becoming bankrupt, she strove to keep herself and her six-year-old daughter from starving by falling back on the traditional stalwart of work for women, of knitting socks to trade.[26] We have seen earlier that the income derived from this source was scant; indeed, according to David Davies, writing in 1794, women "were obliged to beg to make up for the deficiencies of their earnings" so dire was the situation at times of depression.[27] At such times, the costly burden of bringing up yet another child may well have accounted for the incidence of infant deaths caused by being overlain by a parent (infanticide and illegitimate births will be discussed later). Certainly the number of inquests on overlain infants in the Spring of 1845 prompted magistrates at the Cardiganshire Quarter Sessions to threaten severe penalties for future cases. [28] Whether Carmarthen widow, Eliza Lewis, some years later, deliberately suffocated her three-week-old daughter in bed or, as she explained when brought to court, it was an accident born of her drink-induced heavy sleeping, is difficult to decide. Perhaps, in this particular case, the burden of proof lay in her status as a widow. [29]

The need merely to survive propelled whole families, including wives, mothers, sisters and daughters, into the realms of social crime, a term used by historians to describe activities such as wrecking, smuggling, and poaching which, although legislated against at law, were legitimised by popular opinion.[30] For women living adjacent to the treacherous sands and shallow waters of Cefn Sidan, to the east of Carmarthen Bay, wrecking, for instance, was a way of life. [31] There, as in other coastal locations, they, along with family and friends, braved storms and heavy seas in order to pillage wrecks, the contents of which they saw as being theirs by right. At such times, the fever-pitch excitement and danger led to discoveries of alcohol being immediately and avidly consumed. Newspapers report hundreds of men and women being reduced to drunkenness when the Norwegian brig, "Bergetta", lost her cargo of wines and spirits on Cefn Sidan Sands in 1817.[32] Likewise, when casks were

washed up on the shores of St. Dogmaels, in north Pembrokeshire, it was said that labourers, fishermen and women drank to such excess that they were lying on the sands "in a beastly state of intoxication".[33] Nor can the perils of wrecking be exaggerated. The dangers that existed for women amidst the wreck of a broken ship can be best illustrated by the account of the plundering of the "Increase" in Druidston Haven, in Pembrokeshire. Exposed gunpowder from broken casks exploded, injuring sixty, amongst them women whom, it was said, suffered greater harm on account of their flowing dresses which caught alight. [34]

Even when not actively involved in these shadowy activities, many were certainly accessories to what they saw as perfectly legitimate acts but what constituted countryside crimes by law. Poaching, for instance, was endemic throughout rural society. Writing in the nineteenth century on the subject, James Watson recalls how all members of the community from cottage women to postmen spent their winter months mending nets, making wires and training dogs.[35] The evidence, however, suggests that women had mainly a collaborative role in poaching, generally being more active as carriers and sellers than actually participating in such activities themselves.[36] But even hawking *legitimate* goods carried its own penalties, for just as certain countryside customs became eroded and were made illegal, so did women find themselves increasingly denied the chance to make an income as Victorian attempts at orderliness, control and sanitation came to govern all aspects of public life. Strict market regulations, which forbade the selling of produce, legitimate or otherwise, in any other location except within a given authorised fee paying area, outlawed hawking and street selling, two traditional means for poor women to make a living. Constituting a good illustration of how a change in the laws altered previous legitimate roles into criminal acts, accusations of defrauding market lessees of their just toll exposed women to prosecutions and warnings or fines not to re-offend, as authorities clamped down on the practice.

It appears, however, that women proved determined to resist such changes, for, as late as 1865, a disgruntled observer commented that more poultry was sold at Carmarthen's Royal Oak gate than in the whole market [37]. Nevertheless the laws did considerably restrict the practice, and, by doing so, particularly affected the poorer rural women visiting towns on market day with their baskets containing indeterminate quantities of fresh (and, in some cases, not so fresh) produce such as poultry, eggs, potatoes or anything else which could be sold around the doors to regular and random customers. [38]

For many, scrimping and scavenging, the golden bywords of household management, represented a vital means of staying alive. What extra food could be served was given to the male breadwinner rather than shared with the rest of the family. That wives abstained from partaking of the most nourishing food in favour of giving to family members is vividly illustrated by the experiences of one farming family in 1850s Merioneth, where the husband was served part of a herring to accompany his potatoes and buttermilk, while his children were given the bones that he had left behind as a treat. [39] As Olwen Hufton has observed, women's self-sacrifice often resulted in their being " more likely to feel the physical effects *of deprivation, in part because they denied themselves food in order to feed the rest of the* family".[40] Women's skills in feeding their families as nutritiously as possible was, according to Elizabeth Roberts when studying working-class women's strategies for survival at the end of the nineteenth century and later in northern English towns, highly successful. With bread baked at home providing the staple diet, they managed, with ingenuity, to serve nutritious and economical fare.[41] In the Welsh countryside, too, women were well-versed in the arts of substitution. When the staple potato crop, with which most labourers and their families subsisted, failed in 1847, cottagers were reduced to surviving on small amounts of oatmeal boiled in water with, perhaps, the odd turnip or swede. [42] Without even these resources

available, the most destitute were forced to make their gruel by begging handfuls of barley meal to boil with nettles and any other edible weeds which could be procured. [43]

Taking the principles of gleaning to its extreme, women collected whatever they could for use in the home or for selling on. In what was truly a scavenging economy, shorelines were combed for debris washed up, seabirds' eggs collected from cliffs and headlands to sell, stray lumps of coal picked up from rail trams, and clay was gathered to make culm for heating. Claiming these as their right, women loitered in the grey areas between lawfulness and illegality, for such actions came to be increasingly seen as theft or malicious injury to property. For some, a far higher cost was extracted than would have been the case if legally purchased.[44] Freeholders and manorial lords from the mid-eighteenth century onwards increasingly sought to establish their legal right to their property in the face of what they deemed to be the marauding activities of the poor; in the process, more and more of the customary 'rights' of the property-less were clamped down upon, above all else their right of grazing livestock on, and taking firewood from, the open commons, activities which had furnished the essentials of life. No wonder, then, that any attempts at enclosure were met with resistance. Hardship was, in addition, effectively compounded when attempts to continue collecting and gathering led to prosecutions. Arguments, assaults, summons, court appearances, fines and prison sentences were familiar territory for the very poor. Nevertheless, in times of scarcity, notions of right and wrong became deliberately blurred, as starvation propelled the desperate towards the illegal. As providers for their families, women were often at the forefront of these actions. During the hardship year of 1847, the grounds of A.L.Gower's estates near Llechryd in Cardiganshire were plundered by upwards of twenty persons, who were disturbed surreptitiously digging turnips; it comes as no surprise that hastily abandoned clogs, left as the guilty parties fled, belonged to women.[45] Fifteen years later, Mary Owen was caught with a wheelbarrow carting culm she had dug on land

belonging to a certain Revd. Mills, despite the public notices repeatedly put up banning the practice.[46] While underwood or kindling was considered fair pickings for most, others went further, chopping trees and branches. [47] Sometimes, as need overtook scruples, theft became less a matter of principle, and chronic poverty led inexorably to a pattern of habitual theft. Countryside thefts occurred in fields, orchards, gardens and hedges and included digging up potatoes, cutting turnips, picking fruit and gathering sheaves of corn and even snatching washing left to dry outside, while livestock, mainly poultry and sheep, but horses, donkeys and cows also, were stolen and killed or traded. [48] Stealing milk was not uncommon and almost always committed by women, usually under cover of darkness, when cows were out on pasture. Carrying an earthenware jug, Lettice Thomas surrepticiously milked Griffith David's three cows over the course of five nights, and might have continued if the farmer's wife and her dairy maid, noticing that their milk yield was lower than normal, set watch and caught her in the act. [49] Commonplace replies when women were questioned as to their motives for stealing included: "I was almost starving and that is why I took it" ("wretchedly poor" was the policeman's description when arresting the girl for stealing a small quantity of coal), and "We did it through poverty" (a woman and her daughter who had stolen wheat and potatoes in St Ishmael).[50] Mary Kyle stated that she stole hay from a rickyard in order to feed her two starving donkeys.[51] In villages, towns, markets and fairs, female theft was conducted under the specialised names of shoplifting, pickpocketing, and unlawfully obtaining goods under false pretences, and items taken comprised mainly money, household wares, fuel, cloth, clothing and boots.[52] Within the more populated areas, greater opportunities existed to dispose of stolen goods. The demand for second-hand clothes and household goods that must have existed in the consumer-starved south-west Wales towns instigated considerable back-street buying and selling where women, with their specialist knowledge of such goods, would have taken a central role. Some were known for receiving stolen goods, and operated under a

variety of nicknames, such as Pall Dolly, who lived in Lower Water Street in Carmarthen, while Martha Wigley was so renowned in her locality that she went under the soubriquet "the Cardigan Auctioneer". [53]

For women resident in the towns of south-west Wales, pawnbrokers, like Llanelli's Israel Dutton, Carmarthen's Sanson Hewson and Pembroke's James Fitzgerald, and even shopkeepers, in some cases, offered a quick and legal solution in combatting temporary shortage or poverty, that is, if any belongings to pledge could be spared.[54] For most, however, pledging goods represented a means of keeping debts within reasonable proportions and under some modicum of control, while the pattern of insolvency continued unabated. The very desperate, of course, would have had little to trade, besides their bodies, and, as an alternative to begging, resorted to prostitution. [55] For most women, selling their bodies for sex represented a temporary measure to be resorted to when other means of earning an income were not forthcoming. [56] While prostitution might have been a temporary resort for many, there is ample evidence that there were others, "unfortunates", who, unable to claw their way out of poverty, became trapped into a life of destitution and vice. Visible through their many appearances in court, typical was Mary Ann Thomas of Carmarthen, who, in 1849, at her third appearance in court for being drunk and disorderly, was, at the age of 18, thought by a local newspaper reporter to be of "very prepossessing appearance".[57] By 1852, three years and fourteen charges later, the same newspaper's reporter, far from mentioning good looks, instead, censured her for her "filthy and disgusting Language", while her punishments had increased in severity from mere reprimands to custodial sentences lasting months. [58]

If perhaps more synonymous with urban settings, prostitution, albeit on a more casual and irregular basis, was nevertheless practised in the countryside, for sex, as a commodity to trade, remained, alongside begging, an option for survival for poverty-stricken women

everywhere. Equally, there were men who were only too ready to trade favours for sex. In this respect, the transport industry appears to be as notorious then as now for this type of barter. Typical, perhaps, was Sarah Smith, an exhausted single mother who, while trudging from Carmarthen to Llandeilo, traded her body in exchange for a lift and some money for herself and her child, after flagging down a passing wagon. That the waggoner was often in the habit of giving lifts to women under similar conditions, and, in addition, made a habit of offering his employer's goods instead of the promised money, transpired only after a quantity of huckabuck, given to Sarah in lieu of money, was found missing. (Incidentally, it was Sarah, alone, who was taken to court, convicted of stealing and transported for seven years).[59]

Besides the survival strategies employed by needy women there were, in addition, mechanisms, notwithstanding they were casual and conditional, within Welsh society for buttressing the poor or at least enabling them to acquire sufficient to make the difference between living and starving. A number of agencies and groupings, including family, neighbours and friends, often rallied to give informal support, which, appearing, in some cases, piecemeal and temporary in nature, were nevertheless vital for survival. In times of hardship, family and kinship networks especially - such networks figuring prominently in Welsh rural communities - were responsible for providing a substantial proportion of support and help.[60] But, even without family or kin to help, neighbourhood assistance was often forthcoming, for instance, if there were associations with a particular farm or farming family. We are told by D.J.Williams in *The Old Farmhouse* that local spinster, Pegi the Lofft, was fortunately saved from her miserable existence of loneliness and destitution in old age by the generosity extended to her by her farming friends, including the author's family, who accepted her into their homes. [61]

Not all could hope for assistance of this kind, and neither was it a mandatory requirement to extend help. While for some, kin networks were absent, others' expectations of support were dashed, as familial bonds stopped short of caring. Newspapers, for instance, testify to numerous cases where elderly parents, of both sexes, were neglected and ignored by their children. In the case of parish paupers, where it was known they had family, relatives were eventually tracked down, investigated as to their financial circumstances and, if necessary, summonsed to appear before magistrates for orders to be made for maintenance payments. Ann Williams' two sons, both single and both found to be earning a good income, had relegated her to living a pauper's existence, until it was decreed that they each pay a sum of 1s. 3d. towards her upkeep, a hardly generous sum to live on. [62]

Within the community, women could expect help in a variety of forms and through a number of channels. Cwrw bach, where ale was brewed and sold at a recipient's home, provided a welcome chance to raise funds perhaps during a particularly difficult period, when additional hardship might be experienced. Akin to a wedding party, the proceeds would be given to the person holding the party. [63] A poverty-stricken Mary Jones held her cwrw bach so that she could pay her rent with the proceeds. [64] Elizabeth Jones held hers, on account of being a widow, and very poor, while William Rees' daughter, on becoming a single mother, the child's father having absconded, found "her friends doing something . . ." for her by holding a cwrw bach.[65] In all these cases, neighbours and friends congregated to give practical support in the form of financial aid to a person within their midst who needed help, while at the same time enjoying the proceedings, although tightening regulations for the licensing of beer eventually restricted such activities somewhat.

At other times, charity was dispensed through the enactment of traditional customs. Even up until the end of the nineteeth century, elderly women accompanied children in spending New Year's Day (Calennig) from dawn to dusk in visiting houses within their

locality and accepting charitable donations, as was the age-old custom.[66] What they could expect to receive, either by way of cash or foodstuffs, depended very much on the means, and generosity, of the individual household they petitioned. At Bryn Myrddin in Carmarthenshire, women were awarded two pence, an amount above the one pence handed to children but below the three pence given to men-folk.[67] Elsewhere, where there was less inclination to give cash, a combination of bread, cheese, milk or oatmeal was given, and gratefully accepted. [68] Always there was resort to those more fortunately placed in society. Where aid could be accessed, it made sense for those suffering from fluctuating fortunes, as in economic depression, to petition for help, if not for charity. One widowed tenant on the Picton Castle estate in Pembrokeshire, in the hardship years of the early 1880s, explained her position to her landlord as such. Stating that she was unable to procure seed to put on her land she told him: "I have the land all ready, if I could get the seed. . . I have never before asked for anything but bad Times and the Bad Season Compels me now . ." [69]

More generally, charity was dispensed to the poor on the part of the upper sections of society by way of seasonal benevolence, usually at auspicious times in the Christian calendar, such as Christmas, New Year and Easter. The Christmas and New Year period, especially, was a favoured time for local landed or middle-class families, individually, or through organising committees, composed predominantly of women and usually under the direction of the local clergy, to extend benevolence. Donations of food, clothing, bedding or coal would be given to the poor of the neighbourhood. In some cases yards of flannel would be distributed for cottage women to make up into garments for the family. The Dorcas society of Llandeilo in Carmarthenshire was responsible for distributing £65 worth of clothing and blanketing amongst 166 poor people at Christmas 1849.[70] Certain jointly organised charities specifically targeted widows for help; others, poor women with families. In January 1864 Mrs David Rees organized the distribution to sixty widows in Llanelli of a number of

blankets paid for by subscriptions raised by the congregation of her local chapel. [71] Often, bread might be distributed to the poor, as on New Year's Day in Carmarthen, through the auspices of the Church.[72] Glowing press reports, while ingratiatingly applauding such actions, favourable assessed their impact. The quantity of bread which was distributed in Llandowror, Carmartheshire, in March 1863 was apparently so plentiful, that "of the immense number of women and children that flocked into the village, no-one returned empty-handed".[73] Unfortunately, as in all other cases, we have no way of telling how far the gesture went to assuage the women's immediate need for food or how it would have helped alleviate their long-term poverty. Equally, we have no means of ascertaining the feelings or thoughts of the recipients when receiving the charity.

Other exertions made to relieve the misery of the poor came at times of desperate scarcity, harvest failure or inclement weather. At such times, wives of landowners were exhorted to donate nourishing fare such as eggs to the poor and to impress upon their tenants the urgency of doing likewise.[74] The weather in the first few months of 1838 was so severe that collections in a number of localities in south-west Wales were made in order to provide coal for the poor who were unable to work. [75] Soup kitchens, institutions more commonly associated, perhaps, with poverty and deprivation in towns than in the countryside, were established during severe shortage. One at the village of Laugharne in Carmarthenshire, opened in 1850 under the auspices of the church, with the help of neighbouring ladies, supplied soup two days a week to the local poor at reduced rates of a half-penny a quart.[76]

Subscriptions were also raised at times of disasters and accidents where the loss of the major breadwinner in a family spelled ruin for his dependants. The sums raised, although affording only a measure of immediate support, were eagerly seized upon by grieving families. When one observer visited the cottage of a widow, whose husband had, with other workmen, recently drowned whilst crossing the sea from Caldy Island to Tenby, he found her

lying on some straw, without a bed or even bedclothes to cover her, surrounded by her eight children, and in the greatest distress. No doubt the grief the widow experienced was compounded by the knowledge that whatever hardships they had experienced before, was nothing in comparison to the destitution they now faced. [77] In this particular disaster, as in others, charitable subscriptions would be instigated to help the family. Practical help for wives recently widowed sometimes came in the purchase of useful tools to provide the means of making a future living. Mindful of the regular, albeit sparse income which could be earned by taking in washing without having to leave the confines of a home - a vital consideration for those with young children to care for - very often subscribers made their donation in the shape of a mangle for wringing clothes.[78]

Some philanthropic efforts were occasionally made to ease the situation of particular categories of women and children who had suffered bereavement or had encountered misfortune. Especial sympathy was extended to the widows of clergymen of the Principality. Expressing itself in the creation of charitable trusts designed to relieve suitable candidates, one such, named after its benefactrice, "Miss Hester Bowen's Charity for the Relief of Clergymen's Widows", extended to those who resided in the counties of Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire. In the event of a vacancy occurring, distressed widows were to apply to the charity by sending a statement of their circumstances to one of the trustees to be considered for relief. [79]

Much of the charity that was meted out stemmed from the awareness of the genuine hardship suffered by the needy due to unemployment and lack of opportunity. Yet there was no guarantee that donations would be extended. Hospitality and sympathy for the plight of the poor could be easily withdrawn when thought undeserved or not necessary. Spontaneous gestures of charity were somewhat diminished towards women and children, for instance, later in the century, when it was thought that they could always manage to scrape together a

shilling or two.[80] Equally, giving was not unconditional, for much depended on whether the recipient was deemed a worthy candidate for help. For women, suitability depended, to a large extent, on their standing and reputation in local society. One lying-in charity formed in Carmarthen in Spring 1817 to relieve women during and after pregnancy with subscriptions and donations collected from the affluent of the town, which would facilitate each recipient receiving a quantity of bedclothes and two articles of every kind necessary for herself and her child and, on delivery, a gallon of caudle (soup), 3 lbs. of mutton and a shilling's worth of bread, stipulated that only those married cottage women of good character be proposed. [81]

As Pamela Horn asserts, "rewarding the worthy and ignoring the backslider" was the governing principle for determining who was a suitable candidate to receive help.[82] In this way, elements of moral guidance became firmly entrenched into charitable endeavours. The giving of charity was, in the words of Jane Long, a "constant struggle to encourage poor women to 'correctly' perform in the charitable scripts written for them".[83] Brushes which had been distributed to the poor in Cardigan were noted, in criticism, not to have been used.[84]

Inculcating the labouring classes with the virtues of prudence, self-discipline and self-help was an inherent part of Victorian charity. Penny clothing clubs, which were introduced through the efforts of local ladies and the Church, for instance, were designed to develop notions of thrift and saving amongst cottage wives. Often run in the schoolroom with children acting as intermediaries for their parents, the routine at Narberth national school involved the collection of contributions every Monday. For every shilling saved, two pence extra was added by the organisers. Tradesmen were canvassed to supply goods at the lowest possible price, which would be paid for out of the club money and distributed amongst the poor families, usually at Christmas time or at New Year.[85] Thus at the sixth anniversary of Llanstephan Clothing club on the 8 November 1849, 200 poor women from the parish of Llangunnog, Carmarthenshire, congregated in the schoolroom at Llanstephan to choose items

of clothing supplied by a shop at Carmarthen and a local weaver, to the amount that constituted the sum of their savings; to each of these women were given an extra 2s. 6d. donated by charitable subscription.[86] Occasions like this would be rounded off by a tea party held for the benefit of the children and their families. As well as encouraging thrift, it was hoped that the contacts made between cottage wives and those of the local clergy or gentry families would create links leading to enhanced employment prospects for their children within such houses. As a result, not only would the cottage children raise their own expectations, but as a consequence of being regularly employed, they would be able to support their parents financially in times of sickness and old age, thus preventing them from becoming burdensome to the parish. [87]

While the ad hoc, informal charity extended under the guise of neighbourliness, kindness, improvement or custom worked to alleviate some need, most poor women perforce were driven to apply to their parish authorities, the "safety net" for society's paupers, to be officially relieved. In some cases, paupers were found work within the parish remit. That parish vestries as at Carew, in Pembrokeshire, employed women for a variety of tasks has already been discussed. [88] Women were especially favoured as carers for orphaned children, the sick, and elderly paupers in the neighbourhood. [89] It was females who took on the role of caring for dependants left in the event of death to fend for themselves, by giving comfort and shelter. Likewise, it was usually impoverished women who were employed in the risk-laden business of watching for signs of disease in times of epidemics and consigned to sitting with the suspected case. In doing so, of course, they were placed in a prime position to risk catching the infection themselves.[90] Some idea of the life-threatening danger inherent in caring during outbreaks of epidemics, such as cholera, can be illustrated by an incident in 1854, in Fishguard, where, in a sequence of events born out of poverty and squalor, at least one woman fell ill and died as a result of caring for an orphaned child whose father and sister

were already victims of the disease. That she was persuded by the Relieving Officer to take in the child and risk both herself and her own two children's lives, was no doubt due to the her desperate situation, for, it was said, all she had to feed her family on that fateful Sunday was three and a half pence worth of bread. [91]

Parish support for the poor of south-west Wales generally took the form of outdoor relief, however, and continued largely throughout our period, despite its abolition for the able-bodied by the laws of 1834. Besides suffering chronic lack of funds, rate-payers in many Welsh parishes were only too aware of the extra expenses involved in maintaining the poor indoors, and thus preferred the award of outdoor relief out of choice and necessity. [92] Methods of payment varied. Large families having to support a number of children on low or irregular earnings were, in certain cases, helped out by some parishes, both before and after 1834, who granted allowances to pay for such necessities as cottage rent. Some, as at Cynwyl Elved, Carmarthenshire, who in this way helped out more than 50 able-bodied men and their families in the winter of 1837, granted relief to a family after the birth of the third child.[93] In Cardiganshire, parishes kept their poor by paying their rents.[94] Mostly, paupers received weekly pensions, but occasional additional payments were also sometimes awarded to pay for rent, fuel, clothing and other incidental expenses or necessities. Within a period of 28 months, from the end of June 1822 to October 1824, among their other awards, the Lampeter vestry paid for pauper Peggy Francis to have turf for her fire, thatch for her cottage and flannel for a shift. During the same period, Betty William Evans received money for turf, two calico shifts, four threaves of straw for thatching, and money for her daughter to have shifts. Meanwhile, Mary Richard, as well as having her weekly allowance increased, was awarded 5s. for turf, helped with her rent, and given money for a winchester of pilcorn.[95]

In the light of help of this kind, few women could afford to be as "high minded" as Sage Williams, of St Fagans, who, when left with five children to support, found the stigma

associated with being "on the parish" too much to bear. By choosing, in preference, her independence, she was, in consequence, said to have resigned herself to "a life of drudgery".[96] Whether supported by the parish or not, drudgery and want remained constant themes within the boundaries of life for the poor, both male and female, although obvious discrimination, by the use of badges to donate their lowly status within the community, was abolished in 1810. Local officialdom displayed a ruthless parsimony towards their dependants, evaluating their level of need and at every opportunity paring relief to the minimum. In part, this harshness towards the dependant poor stemmed from the poverty experienced by local officials themselves who, to a certain degree, compared similarly, both socially and materially, to those they sought to relieve, a situation which did not go unnoticed by Poor Law inspector Edward Hurst: "The smallness of the farms in Cardiganshire and the poverty of the tenants creates a sort of common interest prospectively, at least, between them and the paupers." [97]

Those who applied for relief met a welter of indecision, confusion and time wasting as officials dithered over policy. The Carmarthen Guardians were, according to one opinion, "*.....very ignorant, imperfectly acquainted with the English language and incapable of* forming a correct Judgement".[98] For an award to be made, much depended on an applicant's ability to convince officials that his or her situation was worthy of consideration. Letters sent to the Carmarthen Union, through the auspices of intermediaries, illustrate the extent to which women had to appeal to the authorities in their requests for relief. Rather than being passive agents in the search for parish support, as has perhaps been previously thought, women went to great lengths to present as accurate and reasonable a portrayal as possible.[99] By canvassing intermediaries to write on their behalf, they sought to explain their situation in an eloquent and persuasive manner. Applications for relief were poignant, well argued, and designed to appeal to the sympathy of officialdom.

However eloquent the entreaty, there appeared great reluctance to commit parish funds willingly. Anne Evans, who lived with her three children in the Carmarthen Union, was awarded 3s. per week when first widowed, but when this was inexplicably curtailed, she wrote, through a Mr.J.T.Byers, requesting some explanation and a clarification of her situation. None was forthcoming, except for confirmation of the refusal to resume her allowance. Likewise, we are told of a lengthy correspondence, written over a period of months by a Thomas Lloyd, pleading the case of a pregnant widow and her four children, in which he explains her distressed circumstances and how she intended to rectify the situation by baking and taking in washing. Requesting some outdoor relief in the meantime, her overtures fell on deaf ears despite her intermediary's pleas not to "let her sink into utter wretchedness". [100]

Single-minded in their pursuit of parsimony, parish officials' decisions often reflected their subjectivity and prejudice and were determined by a narrowness of attitude that disregarded outside circumstances and considerations. Married women were denied relief if it was thought their husbands appeared reluctant to work. Elizabeth Richards found her application to supplement the family's income refused at Angle parish vestry in Pembrokeshire, because poor law officials were of the opinion that her husband was lazy. He was employed to work on the highways, and it was thought that: "If he was too lazy to work, then he must do without." [101] At another vestry meeting in the same parish, a number of poor women had their poor relief cut, predominantly because they were adjudged healthy and capable of supporting themselves and their children, a judgement which might have ignored the lack of employment opportunities in the neighbourhood.[102] Always there was reluctance to pay for necessities while a person was considered fit and able to work. Martha Evans was refused clothes for her two children because, in the opinion of the vestry, she was already on

the pay list of the parish for 2s. 6d., and, being a young and healthy woman of 27 years, was capable of work. [103]

Nor was relief awarded without proof of settlement, a legal qualification which determined the parish responsible for an individual's upkeep. Because she had not sworn her parish, Mary Thomas John, unable to earn her living due to illness, was given a lump sum of 7s. in August 1796 to cover her immediate needs by officials at Llanfihangel Ystrad, her current abode, but denied a regular weekly allowance.[104] The laws were especially hard on wives, who, upon taking their husband's settlement at marriage, would, in the event of his death, be removed there, even if a considerable distance away from their usual abode. Watchful to the point of obsessive, poor law officials spent considerable time, money and effort in investigating the correct settlements for fear of being burdened with even more chronic pauperism. As Grace Hagen has pointed out when looking at one case of settlement dealt with by the Aberystwyth Board of Guardians in 1872, the expenses incurred in the investigation stage alone, if including any legal costs, was enough to have supported a widow and three children for a year.[105] Paupers living outside their settlement parish were forced to travel long distances in order to pick up their quarterly allowance.

There is some evidence, however, to suggest that women were treated more sympathetically than men. Widows and their children, especially, were deemed worthy of special consideration. When, in 1795, a year of exceptional high unemployment, officials in Llandyfaelog parish, Carmarthenshire, decreed that poor relief would not be given unless recipients entered the almshouse, widows and children were thus singled out for special attention and " . . . deemed proper objects of further indulgence".[106] During the famine years of the late 1840s, when the influx of Irish immigrants into south Wales further burdened ratepayers, the current Relieving Officer of Carmarthen stated his intention of only relieving destitute women and children.[107] Even so, the amounts of relief awarded were niggardly.

Widows were allocated relief from the parish of 1s. per week for each child under the age of thirteen, provided the child was kept at school.[108] Rachel John, a widow who died at the age of 61, was reported as having existed on 1s. a week relief from the parish and earned extra by knitting stockings and looking after two children, aged nine years and two years respectively, who resided with her.[109] An appalled resident of Cribyn, near Lampeter, was driven to write to the Poor Law Commissioners to complain of the shamefully miserable awards allocated by the Guardians of the Aberaeron Union to two of his neighbours. One, Rosannah Jones, a seventy-four-year-old with a bad arm and side, was allowed 1s. 6d. a week, but after paying for her fuel and rent at 6d. each, and 3d. to have her washing done owing to her infirmity, she had only 3d. a week left for food and clothing, while sixty-six-year-old Lucretia Jones was forced to support both herself and her mentally retarded son on 3s. a week. Using the prices of barley and butter as examples of how costly basic necessities were in order to support his argument (barley at 3s. 6d. and butter 9d.), it is not difficult to appreciate the deficit between payments made by the parish and what was needed for survival.[110]

The poor law reforms of 1834 did not improve the condition of women seeking relief. Certainly it appeared that before 1834 parishes expected wives to contribute towards the family economy by working and awarded relief on that basis, although what was forthcoming was allocated to the husband as head of the household. Hence weaver Thomas David William was awarded one peck of corn and 2s. towards his wife's support owing to ill health disallowing her to "earn her bread".[111] Likewise John Evan and Simon David were each awarded sums of money towards their wives' subsistence due to the latters' illness.[112] Under the New Poor Law, however, with its mission intent on withdrawing relief from able-bodied men and establishing the man as sole provider, the plight of women was ignored to a large extent, relegating them instead to the status of non-wage earning dependants within the family, thereby causing the situation for many to worsen. For instance, reformers overlooked

those married women who, having been deserted or abandoned by their husbands, found themselves alone and perhaps supporting children. While the single mother's situation was referred to, they were excluded beyond the sphere of what was acceptable, and, although considered eligible for relief, had to take sole responsibility for their child.[113] (Both these above categories of women are discussed in relation with wider issues in later chapters).

Even when poor relief was allocated, the reality of the situation for many was that the amount given was woefully below that with which they could survive. The serious financial hardship that Jane Scourfield experienced as a result of her husband falling sick and being unable to work, gives some indication of the dire straits which could easily befall many wives. Jane, a quarryman's wife of Coldblow, near Narberth in Pembrokeshire, found herself not only nursing her sick husband but, at the same time attempting to support her family of ten, which included children aged between three and fourteen. The privations that the family endured became exposed at the inquest on the husband's eventual death, where press attention was aroused by the shabby treatment meted out by a poor law authority only concerned with safeguarding themselves against the threat of inheriting long-term dependants. Recounting the family's experiences, Jane spoke of her husband's previous wages, that is, 7s. in winter and 10s. in summer, which he earned before the seven weeks of illness he endured before his death. Losing her husband's paltry income, as a result of his illness, she had been forced to ask for relief:

> My relief was reduced from 5 shillings to 3 shillings and 6 pence in consequence of Mr. Bush (the union doctor who visited her husband) telling Mr. Phillips the relieving officer not to continue paying 5 shillings or we should be always on the parish. On the day he died, we had nothing in the house to nourish my husband. Three of the children carry sand to the town but they don't get between them more than from 6

> pence to 8 pence a week and I get 3 pence per week with Mrs Winter for washing. . .I did not ask my neighbours to assist me, for they had no fresh meat or a drop of porter. . . killed a small pig about six weeks ago . . to feed it, borrowed 7 shillings off brother . . . for to buy barley. When it was killed, he had half of it. All the bread I had in the house at the time of the death was two cakes.[114]

Jane's situation was unusual only because she was able to recount her difficulties in public, thanks to a critical press. Her actual experiences were far from unique; for many wives, the absence or death of a husband could mean the threat of real poverty falling on his family, a situation which was always exacerbated by the presence of young children.

Inquests on those found dead described the abysmal conditions within which they lived and in doing so highlighted the inadequacy and, in many cases, sheer neglect of the poor law authorities to care for the poor in their parishes. Sixty-six-year-old Sarah Jones was only one of a number of women found dead through neglect in conditions of utter destitution in the famine years of the late 1840s, when other sources of income would have dried up. Starving and barely existing in a broken down miserable cottage in Llangynog, Carmarthenshire, her body was found collapsed on straw scattered on the bare ground she had used as a bed after having cut her own up for firewood. Not able to survive on the meagre 1s. 6d. relief off the parish, she had subsisted by begging whatever she could get from her neighbours. [115] With the relief given by the parish insufficient to meet their needs to survive, Sarah was only one out of many poor who, in the hard times of the late 1840s, had no option but to beg around their locality, accepting the handouts off neighbours who themselves had very little on which to survive.

Those paupers treated the least sympathetically, however, were the homeless or those regarded as vagrants or tramps, with no visible means of supporting themselves. Seen as the

biggest nuisance to Victorian orderliness and propriety, between five and seven per cent of vagrants in the Unions of Carmarthen, Llanelli and Aberaeron in the period 1860-1868 were women.[116] Although constituting a small percentage, they nevertheless were exposed to similar treatment as men. Vagrancy and begging were considered the lowest form of pauperism and had been traditionally seen as threats to cost conscious parish poor law officials who, from the eighteenth century, had been vested with the authority to order them to the local house of correction or even to be publicly flogged. Certainly women did not escape the lash, for Cardiganshire Quarter Sessions Order Books record at least two instances where women were ordered to be stripped and flogged in the market place of Cardigan "until the blood flows from her back".[117] Although by an Act of 1792, and reinforced in 1819, women were prohibited from being whipped, attitudes did not soften towards a more charitable and understanding outlook on vagrants who continued to be viewed with suspicion as criminals, beggars and tramps. Thanks to the Vagrancy Act of 1824, the wandering homeless came to be governed by new "preventative and discretionary powers" invested in authorities which allowed them to act swiftly against persons suspected of begging, sleeping rough, and having no means of obvious subsistence. [118] Those without the necessary means to procure lodgings had no option but to enter the nearest workhouse, for, like young Hannah Davies who was found sleeping on a hay rick outside Carmarthen, they would be swiftly detected, investigated and categorised a vagrant. [119] Persons guilty of offending in this way continued to be imprisoned or sent out of town, as was Margaret Davies, a native of Denbigh, who had already been gaoled three times for vagrancy and who probably wished to be re-committed, having nowhere else to go.[120] Careful of any unnecessary expenditure and wary of giving anything to strangers, authorities were unsympathetic to tales of hardship. Complaining that her feet hurt so much that she could not leave Carmarthen as ordered, a

friendless and sobbing Louisa Taylor, who came originally from Bristol, was quickly despatched to gaol for a fortnight to "recover". [121]

Entering a workhouse constituted the last recourse of all for the very poor, whether vagrant or not. What alms or poorhouses there were in place before 1834, probably differed little from those described by Thomas Frankland Lewis as "miserable hovels, frequently located on the side of mountains and in barren situations".[122] Built thus to deter the homeless from seeking refuge, they were "a place of last resort for those incapable of redemption in terms of ever making it to self-subsistence". [123] They were but the forerunners of the later detested workhouses, to be erected after 1834, and designed to eradicate outdoor relief by forcing able-bodied paupers indoors and so further deter "would-be" paupers from going on the parish. Although workhouses were built in south-west Wales, their distribution was limited and patchy due to the reluctance of local rate-payers to commit themselves to a programme of rebuilding. While poorer upland unions like those of Tregaron and Lampeter had, by 1850, yet to be built, other unions such as Aberystwyth, Cardigan and Aberaeron, where workhouses had been erected, apparently housed few inmates. [124]

Conditions within the workhouses reflected the purpose for which they had been built, that is, to deter paupers from accepting relief. Official reports published regarding the condition of Carmarthen workhouse during the autumn and winter of 1867 made for grim reading, and unfavourable comparisons were made with the town's more salubrious gaol. The female ward's sole water closet, shared by eleven women at this particular time, opened directly into the room and had not been flushed out by water from the drains for two and a half years, apart from what had been thrown down by hand. [125] The lack of cupboards induced women and children to store their few possessions inside their threadbare beds. [126] The greatest censure, however, was reserved for the vagrants' quarters, the downstairs of which were small, bare and cold, the "diminutive" fireplace, when lit, emitting a minimum of

heat. Upstairs along a narrow alley, and steep wooden steps, was a loft containing a few iron bedsteads upon which was spread straw. Open to the elements, the room was chilled by the draughts rushing in from the holes in the roof and the gusts of wind sweeping up from downstairs. [127]

As if the barely adequate conditions were not enough, the system offered no opportunity for complaint. Inmates grumbling of louse-ridden bedding, inadequate food and poor facilities were dismissed as troublemaking, as were any acts of insubordination against the strict enforcement of a regime which, by its terms of existence, had been designed to provide the "wholesome restraint" of paupers through work and personal regulation, a requirement that some refused to accept easily.[128] Spirited new entrants and even longstanding inmates like Rachel Thomas, who had been confined for ten years, often refused to accept the strict and oppressive workhouse regime and expressed their despair by resorting to rebellious and "disorderly" behaviour. Favoured transgressions by women included breaking windows, tearing clothes, using abusive language and threats, refusing to work, absconding and similar misconduct; those who flouted the rules of the house were subjected to a variety of punishments ranging from separate confinement within the workhouse entailing a visit to the "black hole", to court appearances resulting in possible gaol sentences. The course of action depended on the discretion of the master or mistress of the workhouse who were vested with considerable authority to deal with offenders as they saw fit. [129] Over and beyond the draconian regimes and hard, uncompromising conditions inside, inmates had to endure the stigma of the workhouse, which, permeating almost as an unpleasant odour, clung to their person and lessened any opportunities of regaining their self sufficiency. [130]

As always, youth afforded opportunity. For the young pauper finding herself dependant on the parish, a means of escaping destitution and poverty came through the system of apprenticeship, whereby she might learn a trade.[131] Girls such as Ana Jones, the

daughter of Charles the Huntsman, who was apprenticed out by the parish authorities of Llandefeilog in Carmarthenshire until she reached the age of twenty-one, and Mary Jenkins, who, in 1824 was settled by officials at Llandeilo Fawr to a mantua maker for three years, where she was to receive her food, lodging and washing during this time and, in addition, be paid 1s. 6d. during her last year there, were given the chance to earn a living.[132] For those widows, abandoned mothers, the sick and the elderly who found themselves homeless, penniless and desperate without any means of support, there existed little opportunity to subsist without the goodwill and charity of others and the meagre handouts awarded by a poor law system funded and administered by parsimonious rate-payers who subsisted often in the most straightened circumstances themselves. When this apparatus failed, starvation was inevitable.

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1 Vaughan, *Welsh Proverbs with English Translations*, no. 634, p.88.
2 *C.J.*, 31 May 1861.
3 R. W. Malcolmson, *Life and Labour in England 1700 – 1780* (London, 1981), p.79.
4 J Todd, "The belaced and the beliced", *Times Higher Educational Supplement* (16 February 1996), p.22, quoted by Richard Connors, "Poor women, the parish and the politics of poverty", in Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus, (eds.), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, New York, 1997), p.128.
5 Conway Davies, "Aspects of Poor Law provision in Carmarthenshire prior to 1834", in Katie Gramwich and Andrew Hiscock, (eds.), *Dangerous diversity: the changing faces of Wales* (Cardiff, 1998), p.115.
6 I. Jeffries Jones, "The Parish Vestries and the Problem of Poverty, 1783-1833", *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 4 (1950-52) p 224; Davies, "Aspects of Poor Law provision in Carmarthenshire prior to 1834", p.114.
7 Ibid.
8 Revd. William Jones, *A Prize Essay in English and Welsh on the character of the Welsh people as a Nation in the Present Age* (1841), p.18.
9 Jenkins, *The agricultural community in south-west Wales*, p.73.
10 Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, p.31.
11 P.P., 1861, XX111, *Report of Commissioners into Salmon Fisheries in England and Wales, 1861*, p.117; see also *C.J.*, 7 February 1845 wherein an editorial brings their plight to the attention of the public.
12 Hufton, " The rise of the people; life and death among the very poor", p.300.
13 The destitution and grief experienced by a family when one member foundered is ample reminder of how delicately balanced the family unit was. When an habitually drunk Ann Rees, a carpenter's wife and mother of five small children living in Carmarthen, died from exposure, having collapsed in a stupor outside her home, visiting officials, the next day, described a scene of utter misery. Her children, barely clad, were huddled around a bare fireside with their father in a room completely devoid of furniture. *C.J.*, 18 December 1846.

[14] Howell, *The Rural Poor in Eighteenth-Century Wales*, pp.82-83.
[15] Dot Jones, "Self-help in Nineteenth-Century Wales: the rise and fall of the Female Friendly Society", *Llafur*, 1V, 1 (1984), pp.14-16.
[16] N.L.W. MS. 1756B, Walter Davies, Journals of Tours in Wales, 1797-1817, 11 July, 1811.
[17] Ibid., 14 March, 1811.
[18] Ibid., 27 October 1811.
[19] Figures estimated by Jones, "Self-help in Nineteenth-Century Wales : the rise and fall of the Female Friendly Society", p.23.
[20] P.P., 1893-94, XXXV1, *The Agricultural Labourer*, p.65; See Alan J. Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke,1999), pp.129-132.
[21] *C.J.*, 3 May 1850. Likewise Ann Morgans had to go to the trouble of taking the officers of her late husband's benefit society at Llanon to Aberaeron Petty Sessions to claim the £9 5s. 9d. she was due, *C.J.*, 15 April 1853.
[22] Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, pp.114-115.
[23] John R.Gillis, *For better for worse: British marriages, 1600 to the present* (New York, Oxford, 1985), p.121.
[24] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.92. Mr. E Tench of Wrexham, in the same report, viewed the employment of widows as being an act of charity, p.118.
[25] *C.J.*, 12 July 1850.
[26] N.L.W.,Cilgwyn L/B 34, 12 May 1852, and quoted in L. Baker-Jones, "The gentry of Tifyside in south-west Wales in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Wales,1989), p.281.
[27] David Davies, *Case of Labourers in Husbandry* (London, 1795, reprinted 1977), p.191.
[28] *C.J.*, 11 April 1845.
[29] *C.J.*, 21 February 1868.
[30] John Rule, "Social Crime in the Rural South in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century", in John Rule and Roger Wells, *Crime, protest and popular politics in southern England, 1740-1850* (Rio Grande, Ohio, 1997), pp. 153-168.
[31] A government report writes of a group of families, nearly all interrelated, living in this area who, although ostensibly subsisting by fishing, really made their living by plundering wrecks. See Jack A. Nicholson, *Pembrey and Burry Port, their harbours, shipwrecks and looters* (Llanelli, c.1986), p.126.
[32] *C.J.*, 3 October 1817.
[33] *C.J.*, 24 March 1848.
[34] H PR /31/2 Nolton 1781-1812; see also Graham Smith, *Smuggling in the Bristol Channel 1700-1850* (Newbury, 1989).
[35] James Watson, *Poachers and Poaching* (London, 1891), cited in David V. J. Jones, (ed.), *Crime, protest, community and police in nineteenth-century Britain* (London; Boston, 1982), p.72.
[36] Ibid.; women at Rhyl were known to hide salmon fry (young salmon) under their cloaks and hawk them around the town, selling to innkeepers and others. P.P., 1861, XX111, *Report into Salmon Fisheries*, p.305.
[37] *C.J.*, 3 February 1865.
[38] *C.J.*, 2 July 1852, 16 December 1859, 3 February 1865, 19 August 1859 and 7 May 1858 are just a few examples of cases where women were fined for selling outside the market place.
[39] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.55, quoting from C.S. Read , "The Agriculture of South Wales", *The Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England* (1849); T. Rowlandson, "The Agriculture of North Wales", *The Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*, V11 (1846).
[40] Olwen Hufton, "Women in Revolution", pp.91-93, cited in Joan Scott and Louise Tilly, "Women's work and the family in nineteenth-century Europe", p.53.
[41] Elizabeth A.M. Roberts, "Women's strategies, 1890 – 1940", in Jane Lewis, (ed.), *Labour and love: women's experience of home and family, 1850 – 1940* (Oxford, 1986), p.240.
[42] P.P., 1844, XV1, *Commission of Enquiry*, p.239; P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.128. Easy to grow and requiring little land, potatoes had gained in popularity during the Napoleonic Wars as a cheap alternative to bread, *C.J.*, 26 February 1847.

[43] W.J.Lewis, "The Condition of Labour in mid Cardiganshire in the Early Nineteenth Century", *Ceredigion,* 1V (1963), p.329.
[44] *C.J.*, 28 October 1864.
[45] *C.J.*, 26 February 1847.
[46] *C.J.*, 6 June 1862.
[47] See *C.J.*, 10 October 1862, 8 May 1863, 21 May 1858, and 4 January 1867 for examples of women gathering firewood from woods on local estates and private grounds.
[48] The local newspapers were littered with accounts of men and women coming before magistrates on charges of petty theft, see *C.J.*, 30 January 1857, 18 April 1862, 18 February 1853, 4 May 1849, 12 January 1862, 9 May 1862, 17 October 1845, 8 July 1853, 18 April 1862, 31 July 1863, 6 March 1865 and 12 March 1869 for a small sample.
[49] NLW CGS 4/752/6/71; in the case of repeated petty pilfering it was likely that the thief would know her victim well. Keeping watch seems a favoured device used to detect the culprit, and the gender of the watcher was determined very often by whom was thought the offender, for instance, if a woman was suspected or if the crime was one commonly associated with women then the females of the household would keep watch. When Anne Jenkins, a widow, was suspected of stealing hay off farmer David Richards, he set his daughter and her friend, along with a parish boy living on the farm, to stay overnight in the hayloft to spy. Sure enough, eventually, the familiar figure of Anne was seen creeping on all fours and carrying a bag entering the loft. NLW CGS 4/749/3/41.
[50] *C.J.*, 16 March 1855, *C.J.*, 18 March 1859; see also *C.J.*, 12 January 1849, 18 October 1850, and *Welshman*, 2 March 1832; not all thefts were committed due to poverty, of course, for there were other reasons why women stole. Mary Hughes, who was convicted of stealing twelve handkerchiefs from Cambrian House, a draper's shop in Carmarthen, was not only a customer at the shop but also a business acquaintance supplying owner, Letitia Jones, with coal. When the police constable and shop assistant searched Mary's house, they found a horde of stolen articles including children's caps, shawls, plaid cloth and other drapery belonging to the shop, see *C.J.*, 27 June 1862 and 11 July 1862.
[51] *C.J.*, 17 February 1865.
[52] *C.J.*, 11 April 1862, 24 May 1867, 30 June 1854, 13 March 1846, 15 August 1856, 8 July 1864, 1 February 1861, 26 June 1868 and 1 March 1861 are but a few examples.
[53] N.L.W., C.G.S. 4/754/1/40; *C.J.* 14 February 1851.
[54] Melanie Tebbutt, *Making ends meet, pawnbroking and working-class credit* (Leicester, 1983). The scant evidence I have found of women using pawnbrokers lies in newspaper reports of females who have been accused of submitting stolen goods to be pledged; see *C.J.*, 11 November 1864, 1 January 1869, 11 September 1846 and 10 January 1851.
[55] For the links between poverty and prostitution, see Frances Finnegan, *Poverty and Prostitution: a study of Victorian prostitution in York* (Cambridge, 1979).
[56] Judith Walkowitz points out that prostitutes were never divorced from mainstream occupations and prostitution represented a transitional stage only in their lives. See *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, p 31.
[57] *C.J.*, 7 December 1849.
[58] *C.J.*, 20 February. 1852 and 10 September 1852.
[59] N.L.W., C.G.S. 4/753/4/43.
[60] See the previous chapter where I discuss women's contribution towards maintaining the strong links between family members.
[61] Williams, *The old farmhouse*, p.128.
[62] *C.J.*, 22 April 1853.
[63] *C.J.*, 11 March 1859.
[64] *C.J.*, 3 October 1856.
[65] *C.J.*, 13 February 1856 and 11 March 1859.
[66] Davies, *Folklore in West and Mid Wales*, p.64.
[67] Vaughan, *South Wales Squires*, p.34.
[68] Parry Jones, *Welsh country upbringing*, p.75.
[69] Davies, "The Social Structure and Economy of South West Wales in the late nineteenth-century", p.53.

[70] *C.J.*, 21 December, 1849.
[71] *C.J.*, 22 January 1864.
[72] *C.J.*, 3 January 1851.
[73] *C.J.*, 21 March 1863.
[74] *Cambrian*, 8 March 1817.
[75] *Welshman*, 23 February 1838.
[76] *C.J.*, 18 January 1850.
[77] *Welshman*, 2 January 1835. Families of fishermen who braved the elements to make meagre livings were especially at risk from being left destitute. A sudden gale off the coast at St. Dogmaels in chilly November, 1815, saw two boats lost, along with eleven of their crew. It was an event that left ten widows and thirty five children without any means of support, *Cambrian*, 4 November 1815; see *C.J.*, 4 May 1855 and 9 July 1852 for other examples where subscriptions had been similarly raised.
[78] J. Geraint Jenkins, *Life and Traditions in Rural Wales* (London, 1976), p.132. The custom of purchasing mangles to help widows become self-sufficient as washer women occurred elsewhere, see Elizabeth A.M. Roberts, "Women's Strategies", pp.231-232.
[79] *C.J.*, 27 May 1853.
[80] Curtis, *The Antiquities of Laugharne*, p.22.
[81] *C.J.*, 9 May 1817.
[82] Pamela Horn, *The rural world 1780 – 1850: social change in the English countryside* (London, 1980), p.140.
[83] Long, *Conversations in Cold Rooms*, p.167.
[84] *C.J.*, 18 June 1847.
[85] *C.J.*, 8 October 1852.
[86] *C.J.*, 16 November 1849.
[87] Comments made by Sir Baldwin Leighton in a paper "The means of bettering the condition of the Agricultural Labourer", read at a meeting of the Social Science Congress at Bristol, and reported in the *Cambrian News*, 16 October 1869.
[88] Spurrell, *The History of Carew*, p.127. Church linen was to be washed "without any starch at all, very little blue, the less the better. The iron moulds to be taken out, and it is recommended that the vicar should find the salts of lemon for the purpose, which is very cheap made thus: Mix equal parts of cream of Tartar and salt of sorrel in fine powder and keep it well corked for use".
[89] Williams, "Care in the community: women and the Old Poor Law in Early Nineteenth- Century Anglesey", pp.33-34.
[90] During the 1832 cholera outbreak, a poor woman who was employed by the hastily formed Board of Health in Pembroke sat up for two days and nights observing a person suspected of having the illness, and as a result contracted the symptoms herself. Luckily for her, she recovered, *Welshman*, 31 June 1832.
[91] *C.J.*, 1 December 1854.
[92] See letter dated 30 January 1839 to the Commissioners of the Poor from the Guardians of the Carmarthen Union giving their reasons for continuing to pay outdoor relief to unmarried mothers, P.R.O. (Kew) M.H. 12 15873, 598.
[93] Davies, "Aspects of Poor Law Provision in Carmarthenshire prior to 1834".
[94] A.M.E. Davies, "Poverty and its Treatment in Cardiganshire, 1750-1850" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Wales, 1968), p.39.
[95] N.L.W., Diocese of St. David's Parochial Records: Lampeter Parish vestry minutes for the period June 1822 to October 1824.
[96] R.F. Suggett, "Some aspects of village life in eighteenth-century Glamorgan" (unpublished B.Litt. thesis, University of Oxford, 1976), p180.
[97] Hagen, "Women and poverty in South West Wales, 1834 – 1914 ", p.22.
[98] P.R.O. (Kew), M.H. 12 15873, 598.
[99] Steven King and John Stewart, "The history of the Poor Law in Wales : under-researched, full of potential", *Archives*, XXV1, 105 (October 2001), p.136.
[100] Hagen, "Women and poverty in South West Wales, 1834 – 1914", p.24.

[101] N.L.W., Diocese of St.David's Parochial Records: Angle Parish vestry minutes, 22 December 1823.
[102] Ibid., 4 May.
[103] Ibid., 2 June.
[104] N.L.W., Diocese of St. David's Parochial Records: Llanfihangel Parish vestry minutes, 23 August 1796.
[105] Hagen, "Women and Poverty in South West Wales, 1834 – 1914", pp.21-33.
[106] Jeffreys Jones, "The Parish Vestries and the Problem of Poverty, 1783-1833", p.233.
[107] *C.J.*, 8 December 1848. For the whole subject of the Irish immigration to south Wales, see the fine study by Paul O'Leary, *Immigration and intergration: the Irish in Wales 1798-1922* (Cardiff, 2000).
[108] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.41.
[109] *C.J.*, 4 February 1848.
[110] P.R.O. (Kew), M.H. 12 15783, 598.
[111] N.L.W., Diocese of St. David's Parochial Records: Lampeter Pont Steffan Parish vestry book, 1777-1803, 29 November 1791.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Pat Thane, "Women and the Poor Law in Victorian and Edwardian England", *History Workshop Journal*, issue 6 (1978), pp.29-51.
[114] *C.J.*, 30 April 1852. Criticising the inquest's verdict of "death from natural causes" on the body of Jane Scourfield's husband, Mr. J. M. Child, one of the magistrates at the Pembrokeshire Midsummer Quarter Sessions in June 1852, stated that if the man did not die from starvation, then it was something very like it.
[115] *C.J.*, 14 January 1848; see also *C.J.*, 20 February 1846, 10 December 1852, 17 June 1853 and 30 October 1868 for more cases of women dying from neglect and starvation.
[116] *C.J.*, 1 January 1869. The above percentages are lower than figures of between one sixth and a quarter, as indicated by other reports of female vagrancy in the 1840s and 1860s. See Jones, *Crime, protest, community and police in nineteenth-century Britain*, p.183.
[117] At Cardiganshire Quarter Sessions for 26 April, 1786, for instance, it was "ordered that the Sheriff of this County do on Saturday 29 April Instant about the hour of 12 in the forenoon strip the said Hester Thomas from her waist upwards naked, then tie her to the public stocks in the Town of Cardigan in this County and whip her untill the blood flows on her Back. And that the said Esther Thomas be then conveyed from the Parish of Llanfairybryn in the County of Carmarthen being her last settlement.", cited in Davies, "Poverty and its treatment in Cardiganshire, 1750 – 1850", pp.93-94.
[118] Jones, *Crime in nineteenth-century Wales*, p.163; see also id.., *Crime, protest, community and police in nineteenth-century Britain*, p.198.
[119] *C.J.*, 25 October 1850.
[120] *C.J.*, 2 November 1849 and *C.J.*, 7 December 1849.
[121] *C.J.*, 30 June 1848.
[122] Davies, "The New Poor Law in a rural area, 1834-1850", p.264. Criticizing a proposed site for a workhouse to be erected at Llandyfaelog, in 1794, as being too damp and lacking a free circulation of air, it was argued that the authorities could not afford another site and that, anyway, no-one had died on the ground for 50 years; see also Jones, "The Parish Vestries and the problem with Poverty,1783-1833", *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, p.233; P.P. 1836, XX1X, pt.1, *2nd. Annual Report of the Poor law Commissioners*: Mr. Clive's report on the Carmarthen Union, p.397.
[123] Howell, *The Rural Poor in Eighteenth-Century Wales*, p.108.
[124] Horn, *The Rural World 1780 – 1850, social change in the English countryside*, p.116; see also Davies, "The New Poor Law in a rural area, 1834-1850", pp. 273-274.
[125] *C.J.*, 13 December 1867.
[126] *C.J.*, 1 November 1867.
[127] *C.J.*, 6 December 1867.
[128] *C.J.*, 27 January 1865; for an indepth discussion on some of the ground rules that were enforced by workhouses to meet the requirements set down in the Poor Law report of 1834, and how these

were flaunted by "disorderly" women in Northumbrian workhouses, see Long, *Conversations in Cold Rooms*, pp.151–154.

[129] See *C.J.*, 3 September 1847 and 8 October 1847 for two incidents whereby Rachel Thomas came into the spotlight at Carmarthen workhouse as a result of her difficult behaviour; also *C.J.*, 13 December 1861, 27 March 1868, 18 August 1865, 8 October 1858, 22 January 1858, 17 July 1857 and 9 February 1855 for other examples of women's refractory actions with regard the workhouse and its management.

[130] Efforts to integrate pauper children into local schools often met with opposition. Excuses given of full classes only thinly masked the real prejudice against those who "bore the mark of the workhouse" and who, it was thought, might lower the school's reputation. In some districts there was a reluctance amongst employers to hiring a servant girl who,because of pregnancy, had previously entered the workhouse. *C.J.*, 3 April 1868; P.R.O. (Kew), M.H. 12 15873, 598.

[131] Davies, "Aspects of Poor Law Provision in Carmarthenshire prior to 1834", p.115.

[132] Jeffries Jones, " The Parish Vestries and the Problem of Poverty, 1783-1833", p.232; see also Geraint Dyfnallt Owen, "The Poor Law system in Carmarthenshire in the Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Century", *Trans. Cymmrodorion Soc.* (1941), p.80 for instances where girls were apprenticed out "so far as possible to save the parish".

4

Beliefs, Culture and Sociability

Dewisbeth ymorheula pen mynydd.

(A treat, and earn'd by pleasant task,

'Tis on a mountain-top to bask.) [1]

When discussing women's cultural and social lives, reference must be made to the seminal work of David Jenkins, who has identified two very different and distinct social and cultural groupings as having emerged out of the population of south-west Wales by the later decades of the nineteenth century. Classified simply as Buchedd A and Buchedd B, that is lifestyles A and B, they can be recognised not by occupational status, but by differing values, attitudes and modes of behaviour. He differentiates between the two by describing the former as regular nonconformist chapel or Anglican church goers, strict observers of the Sabbath, thrifty in habits and concerned for the future and "getting on in life". They stand in stark contrast to the other grouping, the members of which he describes as being carefree with a more relaxed attitude to life. Less concerned about the afterlife, and living more for the moment, they were far more likely to frequent the public house than attend a religious meeting. The differences between the two divisions were heightened by the near absence of any intermingling between the two groups or participation in similar activities. [2]

Among the first group, Buchedd A, were those who would be considered the "pillars" of local society, prominent individuals whom David Jones describes as being those most likely to assume authority and public office within the community, and to become the driving forces behind nonconformist values and Welsh cultural life.[3] They acted as conduits for the dissemination of the evangelical ideals, including notions of respectability and ways of

behaving, which, at least outwardly, came to have a formidable influence on the actions of Wales' womenfolk. Gaining traffic throughout the nineteenth century was the emphasis on gender differences and the notion of separate spheres of influence, whereby women became increasingly pressured to remain within the private environment of the home, and discouraged from entering the public or outside world which was regarded as predominantly a male preserve.[4] At the same time, women were expected to behave in a demure fashion in accordance with Victorian views of heightened respectability. Homes were to be safe havens for a husband's return from work and children were to be brought up within the strict boundaries of moral education. In turn, women were to be looked on as fragile creatures to be sheltered by their male protectors.

Notwithstanding these powerful and pervasive influences, women's lives were also shaped and moulded by a host of other considerations. Wealth, social standing, marital status, location and individual circumstances all combined to bring a bearing on the influences, opinions and lives of women in south-west Wales.

Sociability and Recreation

Time and money, as always, were vital factors in determining the lifestyle of the population here, as elsewhere in Britain, at this time. If the press is to be believed, females belonging to the so-called leisured classes in Welsh rural society had ample time to concern themselves with matters outside the world of work. Leisure, recreation and socialising occupied the daylight and evening hours of those in polite society, who, barring misfortune or ill-health, followed their seasonal pursuits faithfully year after year. Certainly, newspaper coverage on the social life of the gentry gives enviable reports of the various activities which were enjoyed. Summer months would see the ladies socialising at cricket matches and other sporting events, while they would, among themselves, participate in the more sedate

activities such as archery, where prizes of photographic albums and the like would be awarded to the best lady shot. Rounding off the day's sport would be, perhaps, a ball held in the evening. [5]

Balls were held regularly and often associated with a special event, as a coming of age of the eldest son, the opening of the Court Assizes, a parliamentary election contest, or Hunt week, a regular fixture in the social calendar which was given over to racing, betting and socialising. Local notable families were often joined in their revelries by officers attached to regiments stationed in the neighbourhood, whose presence, notes the press, brought welcome interest and choice of escort for the younger ladies.[6]

For those who enjoyed the sights, summer excursions by boat were organised. In July 1849, about 150 of the more affluent ladies and gentlemen of Carmarthen boarded the steamship, the Talbot, to tour around the Pembrokeshire coast as far as Pater dockyard. On board, they enjoyed a cold collation and were entertained by an amateur brass band before arriving back at the town at nine o'clock in the evening.[7] Excursions of this kind might be organised on behalf of a particular charity. The Widows and Orphans fund benefited annually from the profits accrued from the annual trip to Tenby aboard the Phoenix.[8] During the summer months, coastal resorts were popular venues within which to partake of sea-bathing. The *Carmarthen Journal* reports for June 1854 that Tenby was fast filling up with visitors and that the bathing machines on both the North and South sands were being extensively patronised. [9] (The irresistible lure of the sea on hot days was not confined to the wealthy. One visitor to Tenby describes how, during the warm summer days, parties of "female peasantry" would congregate within the recesses of the rocks at the resort to enjoy bathing in the open sea.) [10]

The climax to the winter season centred on Christmas and New Year and involved a flurry of visiting, balls, dinners and fancy dress dances. The Christmas and New Year of

1818 in Laugharne, for instance, was celebrated with a NewYear's Eve ball and supper, organised by the Misses Neale. The following Monday, a similar event was held by a Miss Brown, to honour her brother, a Colonel, whilst a dinner and ball on the following day was succeeded by a public ball for the "fashionable parties of the town and their guests". [11]

Despite these very public occasions, it appears that some young ladies, at least, lived much less than glamorous lifestyles. Entries in the diary of Jane Johnes of Dolaucothi, Carmarthenshire, made in her eighteenth year during the 1780s, denotes that besides visits to and from neighbours and relatives, much of her time was taken up with minding the poultry, winnowing corn, gardening and needlework, while, almost a century later, in 1879, the diary entries for a young lady living in Tregaron, Cardiganshire, indicate an almost daily preoccupation with the weather and the expectation of letters, with a weekly routine comprising regular choir singing sessions and Sunday sermons, interspersed with occasional visits to, and from, friends and relatives.[12] Even when they did socialise, they would not always expect the finest of fare. Lunching at Pantyderi in north Pembrokeshire during Mr. Thomas Colby's residency, one guest described the less-than-edifying fare as "a huge dish filled with some kind of stew followed by an enormous suet-pudding stuffed with stringy sour rhubarb. For dessert a blue-paper parcel of gingerbread, old and musty was handed around to the guests." [13]

Little has been written about leisure and recreation in Wales, except in relation to popular culture. Certainly, for the majority of inhabitants of south-west Wales there was scarcely time, or money, for recreation. Females, it can be argued, had the least to share on either count. D.J. Williams, commenting on the industriousness of farm women, argues that both on large and smaller farms they worked harder than any other class, excepting colliers, with "no beginning or end to their day".[14] Earlier chapters will have made clear that throughout the nineteenth century the time consuming and unremitting toil of household and

farmyard chores bit heavily into any leisure time that could have been justifiably snatched by a farmer's wife or her female help.[15] Evening and early night-time hours, a time when men could relax, continued to involve women in the routine of household tasks associated with clearing up after serving food and preparing for the next day's duties. Only Christmas and New Year's Day and in some places, Good Friday, were regarded as holidays with reduced work chores similar to a Sunday. [16]

What has been called "informal recreation" nevertheless did take place on a daily basis, but this was often indistinguishable from work.[17] During the course of the day, women would chat and socialise with fellow workers, exchange views and ideas, and discuss events and news within the neighbourhood. Many female collective activities became occasions for socialising and enjoying. Communal tasks, such as washing clothes, took women out of doors and became veritable social occasions. One shoemaker's daughter, who grew up in the 1860s in North Wales, recollected her childhood: "Some of the happiest days of my childhood were when my mother packed us off with food for the day with other children, and to take the clothes to wash. . ." [18] A snapshot of the camaraderie which existed between a group of girls heading towards Aberystwyth to find seasonal work in the harvest is vividly illustrated by Ruth Jones, who describes going with her friends by horse-drawn cart towards Aberystwyth market. Wending their way in sleepy silence over the hills in the darkness of night, at dawn, after reaching Blaeneinon crossroads, they would then sing for "nearly every step of the way" towards their destination.[19] Gleaning after the corn harvest became a working summer holiday that took cottage wives temporarily away from the day-to-day drudgery of cottage life. Taking their children with them, the older ones to look after the youngest, cottage wives would meet up and go together to gather the leavings of the harvest.[20] Those who collected wool from the upland regions enjoyed a similar experience.

Combining work with leisure, they would spend convivial evenings chatting, relating and gathering news with news-hungry farming families. [21]

Even the remotest farm had its visitors. Itinerant dress-makers, tailors, and craftsmen regularly plied their services and wares around the countryside and their visits allowed farming wives, at least, to sit and chat about events and happenings in the wider world, while they arranged and requisitioned necessities. [22] As late as the beginning of the last century, D. Parry-Jones talks of the visitors to his parents' farm. Frequent, and welcome, were neighbouring elderly women and cottage wives, who, he says, relieved his mother's boredom by facilitating the opportunity for a gossip. Others included the seamstress, clergyman, shoemaker and Sally, the itinerant stocking woman, who ". . . was assured of a good long rest at our home and a cup of tea, for my mother always loved dearly to talk about religion".[23]

In the absence of a village settlement or any communal meeting place besides the public house, the farmhouse, especially the more substantial, provided a traditional venue for socialising.[24] In the evenings, a household might sit in quiet companionship, discussing events, telling stories and riddles whilst, at the same time, keeping themselves busy with more sedentary tasks. In north Cardiganshire, evenings were spent sitting around a peat fire, the women knitting or peeling rushes for lighting, the men carving ladles or spoons, while the conversation might turn to stories of olden days, past crimes, tales of triumph over adversity and other favourites, or perhaps just a chatter on the day's events.[25] Common throughout Wales was the knitting nights (*cymmorth gwau*), when a farmhouse might host an evening of convivial companionship which saw friends congregating to engage in light hearted banter and rivalry, the women and men competing with each other in various tasks, including knitting. Not only did such nights help to encourage dexterity and nimbleness of fingers, but, in some places, the finished articles or "guirds" were collected together and sent off for sale in the English markets.[26] One or two of the older females would puff at their pipes, for the

habit continued amongst some at least up to the early years of the nineteenth century.[27] Evenings such as these, spent socialising besides the fire, continued throughout the period and were only eroded by the later, frequent chapel meetings. [28] Given the stiflingly closed and intimate nature of Welsh rural society, gossip naturally formed an important element of social recreation. According to the Revd. T. M. Morgan, listening to, and recounting, local gossip was the people of Newchurch's (Carmarthenshire) greatest pleasure and was welcomed in every home. Especially popular were accounts of more unusual happenings, such as robberies or murders. Spreading "like wildfire" from parish to parish, such stories would be mulled over for some time. [29]

While men could find companionship through drinking and the "rough" culture of the public house, this was denied women. Very much frowned upon as an unseemly leisure occupation for women, very few instances of a female presence are betrayed in accounts of drinking establishments which have been since described as "male bastions" and "masculine republics".[30] While viewed as acceptable for men, and even excused in some cases (as a release from unhappy home lives, for instance), these sentiments did not extend towards women.[31] According to Flora Thompson, the public house in the 1880's was exclusively a men's gathering and wives never accompanied them. The only access women had was if, with a few pence to spare, they knocked at the back door with a bottle or a jug, and perhaps lingered a little to listen to what was going on within.[32] The evidence for towns in south-west Wales suggests that women had greater access, although their numbers and attendance were always far lower, and less frequent, than that of their male counterparts.[33] Hostelries were likely to be visited on a Saturday, for instance, by female buyers and sellers at the weekly market who sought refreshment and conviviality before returning home.[34] The only female habitués, however, were the impoverished and disreputable, who, bereft of other comforts, sought the public house and drink as a temporary means of forgetting their misery. [35]

Apart from functions associated with the chapel and church or charitable ventures, very few facilities existed for respectable females in terms of refreshment and socialising. In Carmarthen, while gentlemen could openly visit the Ivy Bush or the Boar's Head public houses, the only venue open to women of any social stature and respectability was an "inner room set apart for the local quality", which was situated in the back room of a pastry shop belonging to a Mrs. Dawes. Here, ladies could be tempted by pastries and buns (or soup on a Saturday market day), whilst partaking of beverages such as tea and coffee. [36]

One alternative to the public house was communal tea drinking, a social occasion which became increasingly popular as the beverage became more affordable. One mid-nineteenth-century observation was that "women were sociable beings, and nothing pleased them better than to see an agreeable neighbour turning in of an evening to take a cup of tea over which they could chat".[37] So popular did tea drinking become that by the first decade of the twentieth century, in west and mid Wales, it was observed that: "Tea drinking or sipping is the order of the day among the females of Wales."[38] As mentioned above, any leisure time that could be snatched, in between the hours of work, was absorbed in social interactions which involved exchanging pleasantries and gossip, and "re-affirming social ties" with family members, neighbours and visitors. [39]

At work, women's supposed garrulousness was considered a niggling problem for employers, and the topic was a favoured one amongst after-dinner speakers in farmers' clubs and agricultural societies, encouraging many male quips and a great deal of mirth.[40] Mr Buckley of Penyfai's advice to Carmarthen Farmers' Club included his remedy for keeping his female planters working, instead of, he assumed, chatting about their sweethearts, which was to introduce a man in their midst to work alongside them. (To check how much work they did, he observed them for half an hour, measured the distance covered, and used it as a standard for other times.) [41]

Outside opportunities for farmers' wives to meet up with friends and acquaintances came when they attended market, a visit that was made by some on a regular weekly basis. [42] Religious worship on a Sunday and activities associated with the church or chapel during the week also provided the opportunity for local women to meet up and exchange gossip. (In the early twentieth century, as religion was declining in popularity, market days increasingly became the regular occasion for these gatherings.)[43] Other chances for socialising came during the times of customary co-operation that existed among the farming communities of south-west Wales, for instance when implements were borrowed or the services of stud animals or teams of horses were required.

Harvest time was a notable occasion which attracted even those who were not directly involved, to the extent that industrial workers from east Wales would take their annual holiday back in their native localities in the harvest period. The genial atmosphere of summer sun and frolic was heightened, it was said, by the allure of freshly mown hay, which imparted the same feelings of excitement as the first fall of snow has for young people. [44] A fun element emanated from the continuation of old customs associated with the event, many of which had both gender and sexual connotations. Festivities culminating at the end of the corn harvest, for instance, involved the custom of "casi pen fedi", or "harvest mare", which involved bringing the last sheaf of corn cut into the household. Amidst considerable fun and boisterous competition, the dry sheaf was searched for and soaked by female servants intent on wetting it.[45] Well into the nineteenth century at harvest time, women continued to practice the custom of largesse in the form of imposing tolls on strangers coming into their vicinity. So well known was the custom, that passers by needed little reminder to pay the so-called "fetchin."[46] Refusal to pay the required dues led to the indignity of being thrown to the ground and wrestled by women harvesters. Such a fate befell a newly-appointed and unsuspecting Chief Constable of Carmarthen, who found himself seized by two female hay-

makers who bound up his limbs with hay bands while demanding money for his release and safe passage. [47] Such activities died out, however, in the moral climate of the nineteenth century, and women, especially, were heavily criticised for indulging in such antics. When, in 1869, the *Cambrian News* reported the continuation of the old custom of "lifting", at Penyfordd, near Hope, on the Easter Monday and Tuesday, it was women who came in for censure, notwithstanding that they were merely retaliating to what had similarly been done to them the previous day by the men of the village. Adding fuel to the flames of outrage, was the news that they had subsequently spent the extracted toll feasting in the local tavern. [48]

The gathering of the harvest was traditionally a time of celebration and merriment, with feasting, dancing and games held at the farmhouses. Dancing at the Haverfordwest home of Mr. David Rees was followed by a supper consisting of two servings, the first accommodating sixty neighbours and friends, the second for farm servants. After supper, the dancing recommenced to carry on until four o'clock the following morning. [49]

Apart from the harvest, summertime also brought a day of rustic sports, organised in conjunction with the local gentry. The events, which included football, throwing the bar, jumping competitions and wrestling, would be followed by races, both by horse and foot, while a few races at the end of the day were reserved for girls, who would compete for prizes such as gowns.[50] For those living near the coast or a waterway, the annual regatta provided sport, spectacle and amusement. Again, female participation might be confined to one race held towards the end of the programme. Always popular with the spectators, the race would create much amusement at the sight of girls inexpertly handling the boats. At one Carmarthen regatta, held towards the close of August 1849, three boats "of great weight and size" were rowed by women cockle–pickers, all wearing clean caps trimmed with red green and blue.[51] A two-woman and one-man dredge race at Milford in 1830 attracted ten entries, with prizes allotted for the females, while a race for cockle women at Llanstephan and

Ferryside, nearly thirty years later, attracted seven boats for a prize of ten shillings.[52] As Malcolmson so correctly states, sex was a more predominant social determinant than age in the active participation of sporting events involving physical activity. [53] Notions of respectability helped deny women the right to participate and, instead, encouraged them to adopt the more passive role of spectator. When women were involved at all, their role was usually that of providers of refreshments, as, for instance, in the annual football matches played on Shrove Tuesday , where, it was said, they would position themselves at the corner of every street, selling pancakes out of baskets to "hungry combatants" in the game. [54]

Female members of benefit societies looked forward to participating in their individual club's annual festivities which usually took place during the month of June. Members would assemble at a pre-arranged location, where the year's accounts would be audited and other formalities dealt with. This over, members would march to a place of worship to attend a special service and then repair for tea provided by a benefactress. Hence members of the Llanilar female society, near Aberystwyth, met initially at the schoolroom to attend to the club's business, after which, they marched, each member wearing her "emblem of economy", to the parish Church and then partook of a tea, attended also by local children, back at the schoolroom. [55] On this, their annual day of celebration, often members would sport their society's distinctive dress or emblems. In Laugharne, members of the so-called Checked Apron Club and the White Apron Club wore, respectively, checked and white aprons and gilt leeks. [56]

For the wives and children of men working in the new industries, there was the prospect of going on their works' annual day excursion, paid for by the company. The Dafen Tin Works at Llanelli reserved a Saturday in August 1864, for instance, to send over 400 of their workmen and their families to Llandovery for the day. [57] Whit Monday was a public holiday for the trades people of the town of Carmarthen, when shops were shut and large

numbers of people boarded the train to Ferry-side and its environs to enjoy the sands and surrounding hills. [58] Similarly, in Tenby the day was regarded as a general holiday for drapers and grocers. Shops stayed closed and business was suspended as the townspeople sought to enjoy their time off. Women, as well as men, would be drawn to sample the attractions of Caldy Island, while others, perhaps, would attend a tea party organised by chapel or church.[59]

Throughout the century, the event most avidly anticipated, and for many, the sole outing to be had during the whole year, was the annual local fair. Attracting a large, mixed crowd, a typical fair scene would see males and females of all ages and occupational backrounds, whether farmers, farm workers, farm labourers and servants, mechanics, seamen, and miners, congregating together intent on making the most of the day. Bustling with activity, the fairs hosted numerous side stalls including food, cheap jacks selling fripperies, shooting galleries, boxing booths, dancing, and, not least, curiosities such as freaks like the Fat Boy or the Wizard's Temple, where, for a penny or two, visitors could ogle at the sights. Until the advent of temperance, there were numerous gin and beer stalls where it was possible to drink freely at a reasonable cost.[60] At the two-day Whitsun fair at Fishguard in 1861, one of the most pleasurable activities included a boating excursion which took passengers for a charge of half a penny each around the coast for about three miles..[61]

Not surprisingly, given the over-riding importance of land to rural inhabitants, affairs connected with agricultural pursuits interested women as much as men, and they were drawn from all sections of society. Attending the Maenordeifi ploughing match in Pembrokeshire was a party of ladies headed by Mrs. Lewis of Clynfyw mansion, in addition to a number of gentlemen, while the introduction of a thrashing machine by a miller living in the vicinity of Newcastle Emlyn, Carmarthenshire, attracted the attention of several local women including the landlady of the local Salutation Arms.[62] Crowds of both sexes were said to attend the expanding agricultural, poultry and flower shows and competitions organised by the various

agricultural and improvement committees. Attending mainly as observers, females sometimes competed in the various categories of animal husbandry normally concerning them.[63] At the Pembroke Dock poultry Christmas show in1868, for instance, they were prominent amongst the prize winners, and those not competing spent considerable energy speculating as to who would take the honours at the show. Constituting one area of competition where female participation was approved of, indeed encouraged, the show's committee unanimously agreed to introduce prizes for the following year's event from a desire to broaden the range of women competitors to include farmers' daughters.[64] The use of competition to encourage interest was not an innovative strategy, for agricultural societies had long adopted premiums to encourage steadfastness and thrift amongst the lower orders. The annual Llanelli flower show contained in its programme one section reserved for cottagers, with competitions for the best cottage flowers, pinks, geraniums, fuschias, stocks and other annuals, as well as herbaceous plants, and again, as before, a sprinkling of women would be featured amongst the prize winners.[65] (It was said that the hard work and responsibilities burdening the farmer's wife denied her the opportunity and luxury of growing flowers.)[66]

In the quiet backwater of south- west Wales, anything unusual caused endless curiosity and excitement.[67] Naïve incredulity intermingled with fear and wonder. W. D. Phillips, relating how he escorted his servant girl, Hetty, dressed in her cloak and best "Sugarloaf" hat, to watch the opening of the railway and the coming of the first train to Haverfordwest in 1853, tells of her nervousness and apprehension. When she was eventually persuaded to walk to the railway station to take a closer look, she eventually described what she saw as a "funny old thing galloping along without horses". [68]

In the towns, more formal entertainment was provided in the form of visiting exhibitions, artists or the travelling circus.[69] When in 1848 the pyrotechnist, Mr. W.B.

Franklin of London, visited Llanelli for the first time in three years, his display caused a great deal of interest. Crowds of people occupied every available space, viewing the proceedings through windows and even from roofs and the church steeple, in order to get a better view. Every convenient spot in the market was said to have been crammed with people, while the gentry and their wives occupied the market's interior to watch the spectacle. [70]

On a lower note, providing great amusement amongst the less respectable of both sexes, although greatly frowned upon by the more respectable elements of society, were those risque events and spectacles which occurred periodically. Prisoners were gawped at in lock-ups, and crowds of both sexes congregated to listen to lurid court cases and view public chastisements.[71] Women were exploited to provide informal sport, for anything which paraded their inappropriate and disreputable behaviour was avidly enjoyed. A disagreement between two elderly female paupers in Lampeter (Cardiganshire) in 1810, for instance, became an organised public fight, the time of the bout being proclaimed by the town's bell-man. On the appointed day, the two fought with cudgels for nearly an hour, only stopping when ordered to do so by the civil powers.[72] Likewise when two "masculine–looking" females, notorious in the area for their fighting, came together in a field near Box Colliery, in Llanelli, one Saturday night in December 1853, they attracted a crowd of onlookers, who were divided in their support of one or the other. Heavily censured, such activities were hard to curtail. Cries of "police" finally separated the pugilists, only for them to continue their bout a week later, when one of the women, said to be the defending champion of no less than a hundred fights, won and, if it is to be believed, went on to beat up her adversary's male defender also.[73]

Rare opportunities for light relief away from work for the lower orders presented themselves at milestones in the lives of the local gentry, such as the births, coming of age of the eldest son or a marriage.[74] The Tuesday wedding of Miss Gwynne of Quay Street,

Carmarthen, to William Morris, Esq., was designated as a holiday in the town and the event generated much noise and celebration. It was said that the town reverberated from the sounds of cannons firing from the nearby cricket field and the ringing of Church bells and this continued onwards from the night before the wedding. On the day itself, a band paraded around streets festooned with garlands and wreaths. As was usual, the actual wedding attracted female attention and, with the aim of acquiring a good vantage point in which to view the proceedings, women arrived at the church gates as early as seven o'clock in the morning to await the event. After the wedding ceremony, all interests were transferred to the refreshments of loaves of treacle and rustic sports, featuring greasy poles and races, the latter including sacks, wheelbarrows, blindfolds and donkeys, which were laid on for the benefit of the local people in a gesture of largesse. At dusk, bonfires were lit on neighbouring farms and a firework display of crackers, squibs and rockets was let off in the streets around the Guildhall Square.[75] Weddings, of course, were always occasions when neighbours and friends would come together to celebrate and enjoy. Even the more modest nuptials of the less wealthy were occasions to celebrate. Neighbours and friends attended cwrw bach (where ale was drunk) or tea parties, where in the case of the latter they might buy a ticket to attend.[76] Besides weddings, other occasions for socialising came with fundraising events, perhaps for a neighbour fallen on hard times or when help was given by way of a day's labour, when, on the completion of the tasks, the ensuing evening would be reserved for dancing and singing. [77]

With the exception of the fair, other traditional forms of social events were gradually dying out here as elsewhere. Celebrations associated with Spring, where children would scour the hedges and banks of the surrounding countryside for flowers and foliage for the decorating the maypole erected for the event, continued only rarely after the turn of the nineteenth century, only to be metamorphosed at the end of the same century into colourful

re-enactments of days gone by.[78] One of the last of the old social recreations to depart was the annual village wake, which continued in some places up to the 1830s. Held in celebration of a parish's patronal day, the Gwylmabsant had been renowned for its great merriment and revelry lasting several days. Drinking, feasting, dancing and sports featured among the many activities, many of which were held in the graveyard of the Church. While it is not known whether women of the parish joined its sporting events, the evidence suggests that they participated in the inter-parish rivalry and hostility that occurred with members from neighbouring villages during the games of hockey and football. One horrified observer in north Wales describes, in the 1780s, how girls "would enter into the list in defence of their brothers; and even in the middle of rivers, scuffle and contend with robust men".[79]

Apart from a limited range of social entertainment which included village and town fairs, and the festivities of a wedding, increasingly over the course of the nineteenth century the countryside came to hold little other amusements, especially of the raucous kind.[80] In its place came the culture of the chapel, and to a far lesser extent, the Anglican church, with its emphasis on spiritual salvation and sobriety.[81] According to the Reverend Morgan, the only source of relaxation or pleasure to be had in Newchurch (Carmarthenshire) was to be found in religious assemblies, prayer meetings or in listening to sermons.[82] For many, Sunday was a day of chapel and church services, including the Sunday school, where frequent attendance resulted in farm servants and other adults, as well as children (chapel Sunday schools catered for adults also), becoming very knowledgeable in the Bible, theology and Welsh poetry. [83] Besides Sunday services, however, the nonconformist chapels came to hold week-night activities of a spiritual or socio-religious nature which constituted what has been termed by E.T.Davies a "chapel-vestry culture". Moreover, social gatherings connected with the church or chapel took place at appropriate times in the religious calendar. The flavour of these occasions can be demonstrated by one such event organised in connection with St David's

Church Sunday School, Carmarthen, over the Christmas period in 1867, on which occasion a large number of Carmarthen ladies attended the Assembly Rooms in the town where they partook of tea and were entertained by a programme of musical entertainment, in the form of religious songs, arias and glee, which were performed by, amongst others, the Church choir and local schoolgirls.[84]

Sunday Schools held excursions as treats for their scholars. The pupils of the aforementioned St. David's School in summer 1846 went to Ferryside, where the boys played cricket on the sands while the girls hunted for sea-shells.[85] At Llanfynydd (Carmarthenshire) at Easter time, a celebration of the local Sunday School and Church choir at Pantglas was attended by about 150 people. A raffle was organised and a magic lantern show, tricks and singing followed.[86] Some events acted as fundraisers to help pay off the debts accrued when building new chapels and schools.[87] Female concert-goers in Newquay, Cardiganshire, in July 1867 heard a rendition of music featuring Miss Watts and the Tabernacle Choir as they supported a fund to liquidate the debt that remained on the Calvinistic chapel, while a bazaar held at Ferryside to raise money for the building of a school in the vicinity was apparently attended by a number of local female cockle gatherers for whose children the school was intended.[88] Welcome diversions in a limited social calendar, these events were well attended by the female members of respectable families in the neighbourhood. A bazaar held in the town hall at Llandovery in Carmarthenshire was well attended by a continuous flow of visitors during the day. Especially popular amongst the young women present was a game of fortune, the wheel of chance, which was avidly played, at 6d. a time, for a variety of mystery prizes which included workboxes, scent, hair oil, glass boxes, combs ornaments, snowstorms, looking glasses, musical boxes and picture frames.[89]

Chapel and church events were times when women could dress up and be seen in their best clothes, so affording them the opportunity to display their femininity albeit in a modest

way. Easter Sunday was the favourite day for wearing new fashions and it was said for the second half of the nineteenth century that the weeks leading up to Easter were especially busy for local dressmakers and milliners who would find themselves being over-stretched with commissions and orders to fulfil. The importance of acquiring fashionable clothing and the endeavour to excel against one another in this way led many women, if not into debt, to further straiten their already overstretched finances and to scrimp on food and household expenses.[90] Public pressure, too, dictated that ownership of Sunday clothing was essential for the maintenance of "respectability" in the rural districts.[91] (In the early decades of the twentieth century, for the same reason, it was necessary for clothes and boots to be purchased new.) Other factors to be considered when dressing included superstitions; for example, at Easter time, it was considered unlucky if one new item, be it a pair of gloves or a ribbon, was not worn.[92] While older women continued to wear the heavy homespun cloth and old-fashioned type clothing, the younger chose more modern dress and materials, and when possible, looked to copy the fashions brought by English tourists or, if in domestic service we have seen, their mistress.[93]

The element of competition was an important component within the chapel vestry culture in the drive to improve the moral and religious values of the people. Chapels organised literary meetings, very often at prominent times in the Ecclesiastical calendar, whereby women, as well as men, would compete for prizes by reciting poetry or reading essays.[94] During the evening of Christmas day at Llanllwch Church in Carmarthenshire a competition was held on reading, reciting, singing, debating, delivering speeches and singing, with prizes upwards of £3 handed to the winners.[95] The introduction from America of Sol Fa singing in the 1860s proved immensely popular, with the result that "there was hardly a young man or woman with an ear for music who was not able to run sol-fa like reading a book." [96] In Cardigan on a Whit Monday, it became the custom for Sunday schools to meet

at different chapels for recitation and singing, the participants from the various denominations walking in procession from Llechryd and Cardigan to St. Dogmaels and further afield.[97] Likewise on Easter Monday, the town of Aberaeron was crowded with people coming from the surrounding countryside to take part in the annual examinations of the scriptures. [98]

In other places, such as Llanllwch, Christmas was celebrated by the holding of an eisteddfod. Advertised by way of circulars months before the actual event, descriptions were given of the competitions to enter and the prizes to be won which constituted bibles or money. A well-attended eisteddfod, it attracted all manner of people from the village and its neighbourhood, in addition to farm servants, to watch and participate in the reciting, singing, debating and speech delivering competitions, many not leaving until as late as ten in the evening.[99] Popular events throughout Wales, when eisteddfodau were held people would come from the most outlying districts to listen and to participate. It was reported that crowds of people of both sexes poured into Cardigan town to attend the Vale of Teifi Eisteddfod in 1868. [100]

Other societies aimed at self-improvement were designed specifically to attract young people. The Penybryn Cymdeithas Efrydol, near Cardigan, had a membership consisting of scores of young people, mainly the sons and daughters of respectable farmers and others in the neighbourhood. Originally a purely singing class, a desire by members to learn additional subjects increased the scope of the society. Members meeting once a fortnight at a private house at Penybryn near the town would, under supervision, be given the task of completing treatises on a range of subjects including algebra, drawing, translation, grammar, musical composition and ciphering, to be examined at a later date. They would translate viva voce out of English books and compete in small singing competitions. At the second public meeting of this society in May 1862, several glees were sung by the choir and prizes were

given out for the treatises set previously, at least two competitions of which, on handwriting and a speech on "Why wicked children are wicked?", were won by female members of the society. That such societies proved popular can be seen in the establishment of similar ones at Verwick and Cardigan, near Penybryn. [101]

In similar fashion, junior temperance societies, comprising both sexes, namely Bands of Hope, were established to attract younger members to join the cause. They would march through the towns and villages, often accompanied by a brass band, after which they would speak out in public to declare their convictions. [102]

In the larger towns, more opportunities were presented for literary pursuits and personal advancement although, here, much depended on gender and social station. The expanding Mechanics' Institutes, literary and scientific societies, libraries and reading rooms, institutions intent on improving the intellectual and moral aspects of the country's citizens, were largely dominated by male participants.[103] Lectures and talks were given on a variety of related subjects. One topic discussed at a literary society at Llandeilo, for instance, entitled "On the Influence of Welsh Literature upon that of other countries", was heard by an overwhelmingly male audience. While newspaper accounts of meetings sometimes noted that audiences included considerable numbers of females, that they were mentioned at all, is, in itself, a testament to their far more frequent absences.[104] In a series of readings in the autumn of 1863 in Carmarthen, we learn that topics read included a letter written by the Bishop of Durham and extracts from Dickens' *Nicholas Nickleby* and *Dombey and Sons.* Especially popular with females, however, were penny readings and here editorial comments from the *Carmarthen Journal* included hopes that the gentlemen would follow their example.[105] Introduced into the Principality in the 1860s, and described as "cheap popular readings for the millions", penny readings rapidly spread to towns throughout south-west Wales. Their meetings which were held weekly in school rooms and other public buildings

during long winter evenings, and whose readings included extracts from Dickens' novels, appeared especially popular with females as acceptable entertainment. [106]

Religion and Popular Beliefs

It is difficult to measure just how far, and how deeply, an individual believes, but if attendance at a religious service is a general indicator of the level of Christian belief, as was believed by the architects of the 1851 Religious Census who sought to measure the spiritual feeling and religious affiliation of the population of England and Wales, it appears that a substantial portion of the Welsh populace, were, at least by today's standards, God-fearing Christians. [107] The findings show that a third of Welsh society attended a religious service on the Sunday designated for the count. Closer scrutiny is somewhat marred by the failure of officials to distinguish individual attendance at each service, and, unfortunately for later gender analysis, they also omitted to differentiate between male and female worshippers. Given that, in Wales as a whole, only nine per cent of the population who attended any place of worship were counted as having attended the Anglican Church (this figure was higher in the rural districts) and yet a far greater 87 per cent were counted in the Nonconformist chapels, females might well have constituted the greater proportion among the numbers, for in England, it has been argued that, while Anglican churches would have attracted a higher percentage of men as heads of households, more females would have attended chapel. [108]

Attendance at a place of worship, however, does not necessarily denote a deep faith in God, and how devout or fervent the women of Wales were in their religious beliefs is very much a matter for conjecture. As nonconformity spread throughout Wales, and the chapel vestry culture gained favour over the more traditional recreational pursuits, it became one of the few sources of entertainment outside the home. This was not overlooked, of course, by critical outsiders, who cynically viewed this growing reliance on the chapel. It was observed

of the people in and around Fishguard in the 1830s, for instance, that their whole and sole amusement was one of attending the Missionary Bible Societies and viewing the appearance of any new preacher. The frequency of chapel attendance was attributed not so much to religious motives, but regarded merely as a way to pass the time, there being little else in the way of entertainment and amusement in the neighbourhood. [109]

This might be especially pertinent for the female inhabitants, for whom attendance at religious worship was designated one of the few places, outside the home, that middle-class social convention allowed them, as the fairer and weaker sex, to visit. Denied many other opportunities to socialise outside the home environment, attendance at church and chapel gave them an opportunity to mix and socialise with friends and neighbours and be entertained. Of course, the hand of control - so bitterly decried by writer Caradoc Evans in his portrayal of Welsh rural society in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods - that was exerted by religion on God-fearing "respectable" folk would have been even more effectively used against females, who were especially susceptible to social exclusion.[110] The social repercussions attached to being pointedly and derogatorily referred to in an address by the Revd. Rees at Holy worship on the Sunday before Easter 1857, and furthermore to being refused communion the following Sunday, were sufficiently upsetting to drive Mary Ann Jones, a servant at Pigeonsford mansion in Llangrannog, to petition both her mother and her employer's family over the affair. The latter's concern that "the refusal to administer Holy Sacrament to the girl will operate as a stigma upon her character", led to a lengthy correspondence between them and the Bishop by way of complaint , and serves to illustrate the importance of religious affiliation in the maintenance of a person's good standing in respectable circles.[111]

A variety of other considerations would have contributed to regular attendance. Allied to the sociability of the occasion was the added attraction, for the single, of meeting

members of the opposite sex. Despite the outraged denials of nonconformists to allegations of immorality at religious meetings, flirtations and courtships did, nevertheless, occur on the way to and from services, and were doubtless the foci of much speculation in between.[112] For others, perhaps, both old and young, the thrill of attending lay in the undeniable charms of charismatic and eloquent preachers, delivering sermons with a fluency and assurance sadly lacking in a local male population doubtless bereft of such skills.[113] Finally, there was the insistence by many tenant farmers that their menservants and maidservants attend the nonconformist bethels, to whose consequent moral training investigator Daniel Lleufer Thomas attributed the lack of crime among the lower orders of south-west Wales at the close of the nineteenth century. [114]

Again, to what degree the religious spirit manifested itself within the female psyche to instill appropriate christian behaviour is open to debate. There were powerful women landlords in Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire, as elsewhere in Wales, who did not hesitate to coerce their tenants by sending notices that they abandon nonconformity in favour of the Established Church, or else face eviction.[115] And in the hands of some deeply religious mothers, Christian behaviour, far from representing a soft enlightening force, was instead delivered soundly to their children, at least, by way of a stout birch stick [116]

There can be no doubt, though, that the female members of a congregation were both enthusiastic and passionate when participating in the religious experience, and especially so at the time of spiritual revivals, when religious observance and feeling increased dramatically. At these times, they actively engaged in rousing hymn singing and articulated openly about their spiritual awakenings and deliverance from sin. Appealing to all ages, revivals particularly attracted the attention of young adolescent girls, who would appear amongst the most enthusiastic of any congregation. At one revival meeting in Llanafan in Carmarthenshire, it was reported that seven girls, who had previously always held an

unobtrusive position within the congregation, came forward, some most fervently, to pray, only to be followed the next evening by 14 girls doing likewise. On the way to and from the chapel groups of girls sang hymns and formed "prayer rings" around those who remained untouched by spiritual feeling. More than one became ill through her uplifting experiences.[117] Whether there was a corresponding increase in religious faith, however fleeting, remains inconclusive. According to one sceptical Churchman, the 1904 religious meetings contained a novelty value for some young girls, who would learn a number of prayers, and relate them, one after another, in public, apparently making the proceedings appear akin to a competition, or eisteddfod. Furthermore, continued the same critic, the seeming religious fervour of even the most eager participant appeared to vanish at the chapel door, after the meeting, to be replaced by rowdy, and even disgraceful behaviour.[118] Even if we attach some credence to this obviously jaundiced viewpoint, it is surely safe to contemplate that some young females at least would have undergone a deep religious experience and corresponding strengthening of their faith.[119]

There can also be no doubting the religious spirit of many women who, in worship, sought to communicate with a Higher Being, or, leastwise, find the solace, spiritual peace and succour in the act of worshipping God that was otherwise absent from their lives. Stories abound of the sacrifices made by Welsh womanhood in order to follow the Lord's word. One elderly woman of 82, living in Newport, Pembrokeshire, for instance, subscribed a penny a week to the Bible Society in the town out of the pittance she earned by selling matches, in order to buy a copy of the New Testament. Her endeavours recognised, she was eventually gratefully rewarded, by payment of the balance.[120]

For many women, as we shall see in chapter 6 on their public roles, the chapel or church became the focal point of their lives, and much of their time was spent attending services and helping with the needs of their particular denomination. Accounts of parish

histories give testimony to individual women like Margaret Price, of Ty Llwyd in Caio, Carmarthenshire, who was "well known in her day as a good Christian, kind to young preachers" and "always respected the Ministry". Having joined the Church at Bwlch-yr-rhiw in 1778, she had, until her death in 1818 at the age of 60, provided hospitality and encouragement to visiting clergy.[121] Other women were remembered for their generosity in bestowing gifts of land for the purpose of building chapels and meeting houses. The Methodist Chapel at Llanfihangel Abercywyn, for instance, built in the 1830s, was erected on land donated by a Miss Jones on a 999-year lease.[122] Many examples survive, too, of women bequeathing money and possessions to religious denominations and for purposes closely linked to Christian aims. A Mrs. Amy Thomas was only one of a number of like-thinking females. In her will dated February 1808, she bequeathed £20 towards the support of Methodist preachers who frequented the Banc-y-felin meeting house near St. Clears in Carmarthenshire, so that they "could continue to carry out the works of the gospel at the said meeting house", and £6 to be divided among those poor in the neighbourhood who adhered to the Methodist faith. [123]

Thought of as more spiritual and mystic than men, as well as conservative, women harked back even further in their religiosity in giving reverence to earlier faiths worshipped. It was they, for instance, who, in the early nineteenth century, still curtseyed and made a sign of the cross on their forehead when passing the disfigured figure of the Madonna and child resting in the parish Church of Kidwelly, much to the condemnation of the men, who called them "foolish and superstitious".[124] But alongside orthodox religion, with its very visible displays of Christian worship in church and chapel, lay far darker, deeper, and ingrained beliefs in pagan and supernatural forces, giving rise to irrational superstitions and fears, which found expression in near daily rituals and mystic observance. Women bore witness to sightings of ghostly apparitions, unnatural happenings and occurrences that were portents for

disasters beyond belief. Superstitions fell on fertile minds and fed on fears. One woman, when journeying back from Laugharne and passing a place called Pant-y-Madog, recalled seeing something like a great dog (one of the dogs of hell) coming towards her, and at a distance of about four or five yards away, stop and set up a scream, so horrible, loud and strong that she thought the earth moved under her, at which point she fell down in a faint. Recalling the blood curdling noise for some time afterwards, she attributed the visitation to punishment for not listening to her mother who had warned her against going to Laugharne in the first place for fear of seeing just that apparition. [125]

The susceptible sometimes found themselves prey to the exploitation of others. Those hoping for a better life, a good future, a love match or perhaps the answer to a particular problem were fair game for the numerous "experts" in this subject, often fellow females.[126] Whilst there were in most neighbourhoods women who practised the "art", the most exploitative were the gypsy women and female tricksters who travelled around searching for suitable candidates to deceive. Neither did the orthodox Christian religion provide a barrier to gullibility, as the gypsies who set up camp near the village of Penygroes in Carmarthenshire found to their advantage, having duped the villagers returning from their place of worship one Sunday evening of the substantial sum of £2.[127] Persuasive, sharp and sometimes threatening, they were skilled at divesting gullible dupes of their coins and possessions, as one seventeen-year-old bonnet maker in Aberystwyth found to her cost when she handed over increasingly greater amounts of cash in return for promises of being told a rosy future. [128]

Belief in the supernatural, at its worse, and most sinister, could prove life-threatening. Superstition and the fascination for miraculous powers had dire consequences for the little girl who was well-known during her lifetime, and afterwards, as the Welsh Fasting Girl, and whose claim to fame lay with the lies propounded by her parents proud to show off their

amazing offspring. By instigating and perpetuating the myth that she existed without nourishment, she obeyed her parents, became increasingly weaker until her death, in 1869, at the age of 12 and a half. When alive, crowds of curious onlookers had congregated at her home in Carmarthenshire, in the hope of glimpsing what they believed to be a latter day miracle. [129]

The very essence of Welsh myth and folk culture, with its supernatural elements, like all pre-industrial popular culture, emanated from the oral tradition, whereby stories were verbally related, embroidered and embossed, and handed down from generation to generation, very often at the hearthside. James Hogg's brother William described the atmosphere which surrounded their childhood:

> To a people thus shut up from all society, it is no wonder to find the days of former years remarkable for superstition, our mother's mind was well stored with tales of spectres, ghosts, fairies, brownies, voices etc. These tales arrested our attention, and filled our minds with the most dreadful apprehensions .... [130]

By using this example in his chapter on the decline of oral traditions, David Vincent emphasises the important role of women in "preserving and transmitting" the oral tradition. For him, it was a role which they continued, in large part, because of their restricted opportunities to engage with the expanding world of printed literature accessible through newspapers, self-improvement societies and the like, all male-dominated preserves we have noted, any literacy that might have been gained through school being sadly under-utilised. [131]

Apart from the bible and maybe a few other books of a religious character, there would have been little to read in the homes of small farmers and labourers, except for copies, perhaps, of the monthly periodicals that circulated around south-west Wales. *Seren Gomer*

and similar journals, which were reputedly seen by as many as 10,000 people every month, provided, according to Thomas Williams, the magistrates' clerk in Lampeter, the chief source of information to a news-hungry population.[132] Although newspapers did reach the homes of working families, it is doubtful, however, if women had the time or even, in this period, the levels of literacy necessary to be able to read them. Nor, as we have seen, did they have the opportunity to peruse the newspapers that circulated widely in the taverns, clubs, mechanics' institutes and lending libraries that became established in the larger settlements, for these establishments were largely frequented by the already literate, middle-class male. [133]

It comes as no surprise, then, that many of the stories later recounted by collectors of Welsh folklore and biographers of Welsh life were related by women living in the Principality.[134] Low levels of female literacy in Wales, allied to a confined lifestyle, led to many females having an enhanced credulity in relation to the numerous superstitions, stories and myths that thrived among communities in the closed and fearful Welsh countryside, where the inexplicable needed explanation and meaning.

Female literacy levels in Wales were considerably lower than those of their male counterparts. According to the Cambrian Education Society, government figures indicated that 70 per cent of married women living in south Wales in 1844 were unable to write their names, as opposed to 45 per cent of men, and a similar situation existed in north Wales.[135] Apart from Radnorshire, figures compared unfavourably with the findings for women's literacy in England. Using marriage registers as an indicator, Doherty found, for south-west Wales, that the most literate females came from the English-speaking areas of Pembroke and the east, whilst Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire not only showed a far lower female literacy, but also contained the greatest discrepancy between the sexes.[136] Figures for the first nation-wide report, using the same source, in 1840, indicate that 67 per cent of males and 51

per cent of females were literate, while the census of 1851 saw a slight increase in the levels, placing men at 69.3 per cent and women at 54.8 per cent.[137]

Even after receiving some education and gaining a degree of literacy, standards remained poor amongst the majority of ordinary people, who, predominantly Welsh-speaking, would have had additional problems with their English writing. The *Welshman* newspaper, in a satirical account entitled the "March of Intellect", quotes a character reference written by a farmer's wife in the locality for her servant: "Amey Richards banbytwrn Llangwnorn he gave a good carriter to hariet gurfis her maid servant to doo a chees and Bitter ond onest and sobor and good maid in his work". [138]

Nor, if we are to believe the newspapers, did some urban dwellers reach higher educational achievements. An account some eighteen months earlier, in the same newspaper, illustrates the level of learning attained by a female middle-class resident of Llanelli:

> Mrs. B. will thank Mrs. C not to bring Her name in queschun agin for if she dose I will immediately prosede agenst you You must have suffishent impudense to prusume to doo sitcha thing if we was even youre Equelles you cold not doo any more, and annother thing I concider I am lowering my selff too even adres you. And for futur I whould advice You to Old your Imprent tong. June 18th, 1836. [139]

In addition to low literacy levels was their lack of numeracy skills. We saw in an earlier chapter that this deficiency led to serious implications for country saleswomen who, after selling their wares, were forced to fall back on the help of more numerate accquaintances in order to total their accounts. To this end, they would resort to shops, where after estimating the number of pounds of cheese they had sold, help would be given to

multiply the findings by the cost per pound in order to calculate the correct remuneration which should have been received.[140]

While literacy levels increased steadily for both males and females throughout the nineteenth century, it was only in the decades after 1870 that a dramatic acceleration occurred. By the provisions of Forster's Education Act of 1870 elementary education for working-class children was made available in every parish either through the old voluntary, mostly National (Church of England), schools or the new Board schools. Compulsory attendance was to come from 1880. The resultant increase in literacy, in turn, heralded a corresponding upsurge in women's reading matter, for while some female readership was anticipated before this time, as indicated by advertisements requiring domestic servants, there later came a steady growth of women's columns and supplements.[141] At the same time, there was, according to Edward Laws writing about Pembrokeshire in the late 1880s, a lessening of beliefs in superstitions and omens, such as corpse candles, and this he attributed to board schools, for mothers were keen to learn from the education given to their children.[142] Literacy and schooling, the "engines of cultural acceleration", were coming to touch a wider female audience. [143]

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1 Henry Halford Vaughan, *Welsh Proverbs with English translations*, no.1396, p.201.

2 David Jenkins,"Aberporth", in Elwyn Davies and Alwyn D. Rees, (eds.), *Welsh Rural Communities* (Cardiff, 1962), pp.12-17.

3 Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, p.33.

4 For prescriptive representations of womanhood in the nineteenth-century Welsh press, see S. Rhiannon Williams, "The true 'Cymraes' : Images of Women in Women's Nineteenth-Century Welsh Periodicals", in Angela V. John, (ed.), *Our mothers' land: chapters in Welsh women's history 1830-1939* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 69- 91; see also Rosemary Jones, " 'Separate Spheres', women, language and respectability in Victorian Wales", pp.177 - 213.

5 *C.J.*, 14 August 1846 and 23 August 1861.

6 *C.J.*, 10 July 1846. Attending a ball and supper held at the seat of Charles Arthur Pritchard, Esq., of Tyllwyd, for instance, were the officers of the 87th, Royal Fusileers; *C.J.*, 16 July 1847.

7 *C.J.*, 13 July 1849.

8 *C.J.*, 12 June 1846.

[9] *C.J.*, 9 June 1854; see also *Cambrian*, 28 April 1804 and 30 June 1804.
[10] E. Donovan, *Descriptive Excursions Through South Wales* (London, 1805), p.395.
[11] *Cambrian*, 16 January 1819; for a similar story at Dale, see *Cambrian*, 6 February 1819.
[12] Howell, *Patriarchs and Parasites*, pp.174-175; N.L.W. MS. 17783A: Diary of a Young Lady.
[13] Vaughan, *South Wales Squires*, pp.109-110.
[14] Williams, *The old farmhouse*, p.144.
[15] P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, p.642; P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.14.
[16] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.125.
[17] R.W. Malcolmson, *Popular recreation in English society 1700-1850* (London, 1973), p.15.
[18] Margaret Llewellyn Davies, (ed.), *Life As We Have Known It*, constituting chapters by Cooperative Working Women (London 1931), p.57, cited in Davidson, *A woman's work is never done*, p.149.
[19] Jones, *Atgofion Ruth Mynachlog*, p.21.
[20] For a fascinating oral account of women going gleaning in the cornfields of east England see Mary Chamberlain, *Fenwomen, A Portrait of Women in an English Village* (London, 1977), pp.29-30.
[21] Tibbott, "Knitting stockings in Wales, a domestic craft", p.63.
[22] J Geraint Jenkins, "Rural Industry in Cardiganshire", p.91.
[23] Parry-Jones, *Welsh country upbringing*, pp.72-74.
[24] P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, p.691.
[25] D. Parry- Jones, *My Own Folk* (Llandysul,1972), pp.93-95.
[26] Evans, *Letters Written During a Tour through South Wales in the Year 1803*, pp.357-358; "Guirds" were made from knitting lengths of yarn which had been tied together. The first person to knit up to the knot would win. For a description of knitting nights in North Wales, see Evans, *A Tour Through North Wales*, p.68; see also Tibbott, "Knitting Stockings in Wales, A Domestic Craft", p.67; P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, pp.649-650. The report describes the agenda at knitting evenings in Carmarthenshire and a number of counties throughout Wales.
[27] *C.J.*, 13 May 1853. Flora Thompson, writing about Larkrise later in the nineteenth century, states that, much to the younger women's disgust, all the women over 50 years of age indulged in what was for them a luxury, the taking of snuff; Flora Thompson, *Larkrise to Candleford*, p.88.
[28] P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, p.650.
[29] Revd. T.M. Morgan, *The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Newchurch* (Carmarthen, 1910), p.17.
[30] Lambert, *Drink and Sobriety in Victorian Wales*, pp.13-14.
[31] Catherine Hall, "Gender and Working Class Culture in England", in Harvey J. Kaye and Keith McClelland, (eds.), *E.P. Thompson, critical perspectives* (Oxford, 1990), p.88. Women as well as men were mentioned in temperance meetings in their entreaties to stop drinking. At a total abstinence demonstration at the town hall in Haverfordwest in 1849, appeals to women to stop drinking focused on their vanity, for the habit would ruin their complexion.
[32] Thompson, *Larkrise to Candleford*, p.75.
[33] R.W. Malcolmson, "Leisure", in G.E. Mingay, (ed.), *The Victorian Countryside* (London, 1981), p.610.
[34] Evidence for this can be amply seen in the many cases of drunkenness and disorderly conduct which came before the magistrates officiating at police courts and petty sessions in the towns of south-west Wales. Elizabeth Lloyd, the wife of a respectable farmer from Eglwys Cymyn, for instance, was found drunk on the road outside the Carmarthen junction station where she had just bought a train ticket back to St Clears. Taken into custody, she was later discharged after hearing her case being tried at Carmarthen Petty Sessions, see *C.J.*, 16 December 1864.
[35] Most of the women who came before magistrates on drink charges were regular offenders.
[36] Vaughan, *South Wales Squires*, p.38.
[37] *C.J.*, 8 July 1853.
[38] Davies, *Folklore of West and Mid Wales*, p.14. Farmers' wives sipped a stronger brew according to William Chambers, Junior, esq., of Carmarthenshire, who, when substantiating his claim on the relative affluence enjoyed by farmers in the early 1850s, fancied he saw "the good wife's gin bottle

going home fuller and oftener from market", see *C.J.*, 9 July 1852; Flora Thompson writing about village women in rural England commented that early afternoons were the favoured time for tea drinking and refers to the custom specifically as "the woman's hour",Thomson, *Larkrise*, p.108.

[39] Malcolmson, *Popular recreations in English society*, p.52.

[40] *C.J.*, 12 September 1845. At a dinner of the Carmarthenshire Agricultural Society held at the Ivy Bush hotel in the town, much laughter erupted amongst the 120 or so men present as a guest speaker, Mr. E Lloyd Williams, Esq., spoke of the difficulties of getting women turnip pickers to keep quiet.

[41] *C.J.*, 6 November 1868.

[42] P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, p.642.

[43] Parry-Jones, *My own folk*, p.43.

[44] Ibid., 62.

[45] Parry-Jones, *Welsh country upbringing*, pp.65-66; Owen, *Welsh Folk Customs*, pp.115-121; Davies, *Folklore in West and Mid Wales*, pp.78-80.

[46] Parry-Jones, *My own folk*, p.86. According to Bushaway the custom of largesse was a traditional way of supplementing harvest wages and in some places was carried out by elaborate ritual. Like similar forms of largesse, there was an implicit threat for those who refused to contribute. Not considered begging by participants the act was, instead, regarded as part of the harvest contract and hence a customary due. See Bob Bushaway, *By rite; custom, ceremony and community in England 1700-1880* (London, 1982), pp.131-133.

[47] *C.J.*, 17 July 1845. The case was reported when the "victim", unaware of the custom, pressed charges with a local magistrate for assault. A defence witness spoke of having been similarly used some 20 or 30 times before that particular encounter. In most cases of this type the charges would be dismissed after a warning not to re-offend. On another occasion, in 1867, a married woman, Phoebe Phillips, and her female accomplice settled for beer money in exchange for setting a Carmarthen surveyor free. On his return through the field they light-heartedly offered him some of his own beer, but their victim did not take kindly to be tackled and pressed charges. Rachel Thomas, a witness, told the court: "we were doing the same then as is done in every field where there is a footpath. It is the custom to stop passengers, demand money of them and throw them down if they did not pay", *C.J.*, 26 July 1867.

[48] *Cambrian News*, 17April 1869.

[49] *Cambrian*, 4 October 1806; for more examples of harvest feasts, see *C.J.*, 13 September 1861 and 18 October 1861.

[50] For a description of a day's country sports held at Cwmhyar Downs, near Llandysul, under the auspices of Thomas James Lloyd, Esq., of Bronwydd, see *Cambrian*, 23 July 1814; for fairs and races at Pembroke Dock, see the *Cambrian*, 22 September 1827; at Ffair Awst in Llandysul, foot, sack and donkey races were held with separately contested heats for girls, *Welshman*, 18 August 1837; see also the *Cambrian*, 19 July 1805 and 10 August 1811 for similar activities at Stackpole Court and Newgale in Pembrokeshire.

[51] *C.J.*, 7 September 1849.

[52] *C.J.*, 20 August 1830 and 12 August 1859.

[53] Malcolmson, *Popular recreations*, p.56.

[54] Hilary M. Waddington, "Games and Athletics in Bygone Wales", *Trans. Cymmrodorion Soc.* (1953), p.93; see also Owen, *Welsh folk customs*, p.75.

[55] *C.J.*, 24 June 1853. For a newspaper report pertaining to the Rose Female Benefit Society's annual celebration at Laugharne, see *C.J.*, 26 June 1846; for a similar description of the Milford Female Society's anniversary outing, see the *Welshman*, 30 June 1837.

[56] Curtis, *The Antiquities of Laugharne, Pendine and their Neighbourhoods*, p.222.

[57] *C.J.*, 5 August 1864. In 1863, it was reported that special trains would be run from Llandovery, Llandeilo and Cross Inn to meet the steamer conveying trippers to Tenby, see *C.J.*, 12 June 1863.

[58] *C.J.*, 20 May 1853 and 14 April 1854.

[59] *C.J.*, 29 May 1863.

[60] *C.J.*, 8 October 1852 for a description of Haverfordwest Fair. Fairs performed a number of functions, involving the hiring of agricultural staff and the buying and selling of livestock and produce. Some, like the annual Pudding Fair in St. Ishmael, were purely recreational in nature. This

particular fair was so named because every person in the community supplied a quantity of rice pudding to be consumed, a day's milk for the purpose being donated by the wealthier farmers in the neighbourhood, *C.J.*, 15 July 1853.

[61] *C.J.*, 24 May 1861. Those recreations which did continue were modified in nature. Disorderly public displays were frowned upon in the quest for respectability and of temperance. Legislation passed in the late 1850s prohibiting the unlicensed sale of alcohol further dampened what had formerly been an ale-charged atmosphere, see David W. Howell, "Leisure and Recreation, 1815-1974", in David. W. Howell, (ed.), *Pembrokeshire County History*, vol.iv, *Modern Pembrokeshire* (Haverfordwest, 1993), p.437.

[62] *C.J.*, 31 October 1845 and *C.J.*, 3 September 1847.

[63] *C.J.*, 18 March 1859.

[64] *C.J.*, 3 January 1868.

[65] *C.J.*, 3 July 1857; Flora Thompson remarks that there was a strict division of labour in cottage gardens in Larkrise for it was considered a man's work to toil in the vegetable gardens or allotments. Women, meanwhile, were permitted to cultivate a small flower border besides the pathway, the plants having been taken from cuttings, or given as roots, from neighbours. This, she says, allowed for hardly any variety between gardens; Thompson, *Larkrise*, pp.114-115.

[66] Parry-Jones, *My own folk*, p.138.

[67] *Cambrian*, 10 August 1848.

[68] W.D. Phillips, *Old Haverfordwest* (Haverfordwest, 1925), p.2.

[69] Crowds of people would congregate onto the streets to watch the procession of acrobats, gymnasts, jugglers and strange animals belonging to the circus, *C.J.*, 16 June 1848.

[70] *Cambrian*, 10 August 1848.

[71] *C.J.*, 26 March 1858.

[72] *Cambrian*, 24 March 1810.

[73] *C.J.*, 2 December 1853, 16 December 1853. It is to be wondered whether the rural migrants who, settling into the industrial area of south Wales, imported pastimes such as these along with other traditional customs, for women there were said to drink, quarrel openly and fight together with their fists, being encouraged by male onlookers; see E.D.Lewis, *The Rhondda Valleys: a study in industrial development, 1800 to the present day* (London, 1959), p.223.

[74] *C.J.*, 13 March 1863 has a description of the celebrations at Llanllwych for the marriage of the Prince of Wales.

[75] *C.J.*, 3 September 1847.

[76] Morgan, *The History and Antiquities of Newchurch*, p 41.

[77] Davies, *Folklore of West and Mid Wales*, p.7.

[78] *Welshman*, 10 June 1832. Haverfordwest, in early May 1900, was the scene of a programme of festivities associated with Mayday, when friends of St. Mary's Church organised events including maypole dancing performed by 100 suitably dressed children outside the town's Shirehall, *Pembrokeshire Herald*, 4 May 1900.

[79] Richard Suggett, "Festivals and social structure in early modern Wales", *Past and Present*, 152 (August 1996), p.84.

[80] David Davies, *Echoes from the Welsh Hills or Reminiscences of the preachers and people of Wales* (London, 1883), pp.359-360.

[81] Owen, *Welsh folk customs*, pp.23-4.

[82] Morgan, *The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Newchurch*, p.17.

[83] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.63.

[84] *C.J.*, 3 January 1868.

[85] *C.J.*, 11 September 1846.

[86] *C.J.*, 5 May 1865.

[87] *C.J.*, 7 March 1862 and 22 May 1868.

[88] *C.J.*, 26 July 1867 and 26 July 1861.

[89] *C.J.*, 9 July 1852.

[90] Morgan, *The History and Antiquities of the parish of Newchurch*, p.35.

[91] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.129; Professor Jones writes that poverty precluded the attendance of many at chapel or school for they lacked the means to acquire "suitable attire". Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, p.103.
[92] Davies, *Folklore in West and Mid Wales*, p.74.
[93] Jacqueline Lewis, "Passing Judgements - Welsh dress and the English tourist", *Folk life*, 33 (1994-95), pp.42-43.
[94] *C.J.*, 5 April 1861.
[95] *C.J.*, 3 January 1868.
[96] T.J. Morgan, "Peasant Culture in the Swansea Valley", in Stewart Williams, (ed.), *Glamorgan Historian*, vol.ix (Barry, 1973); Williams, *The old farmhouse*, p.87.
[97] *C.J.*, 17 June 1848 and 13 June 1862.
[98] *C.J.*, 25 April 1862; see also 30 May 1862.
[99] *C.J.*, 8 January 1864 and 3 January 1868,
[100] *C.J.*, 26 June 1868.
[101] *C.J.*, 23 May 1862.
[102] *C.J.*, 5 April 1861.
[103] The gender bias here has already been noted, see Howell, "Leisure and Recreation 1815-1974", p.452.
[104] *C.J.*, 18 March 1864.
[105] *C.J.*, 20 November 1863.
[106] *C.J.*, 6 November 1863, 20 November 1863 and 19 February 1864.
[107] Ieun Gwynedd Jones, *Explorations and Explanations* (Llandysul, 1981), p.21.
[108] D.Gareth Evans, *A History of Wales, 1815-1906* (Cardiff, 1989), pp.215-220; James Obelkevich, *Religion and rural society, South Lindsey, 1825-1875* (Oxford, 1976), p.313, cited by Erin M. White, "Women in the Early Methodist Societies in Wales", *The Journal of Welsh Religious History*, 7 (1999), p.99.
[109] N.L.W. MS.19159A1: Anon., journal of a visit to the Goodwick and Fishguard Neighbourhood, 1835.
[110] For a discussion of Caradog Evans' work, see John Harris, "Caradog Evans: My People Right or Wrong", *Trans. Cymmrodorion Soc.* (1995), pp.141-155.
[111] N.L.W., Diocese of St David's Parochial Records, Llangrannog, 19.
[112] Certainly this was more than hinted at in the Anglican press. Welsh reasons for attendance at such functions were said to be varied. One derisory account tells of a "withered spinster" living in Lampeter who had matrimonial motives for attending a "Sashwn" held in Tregaron, in that she wished to look for a husband, *C.J.*, 18 July 1845.
[113] Certainly this appears the case at least in the eighteenth century, see Eryn M.White, " 'Little Female Lambs': Women in the Methodist Societies of Carmarthenshire, 1737-1750", *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary*, XXV11 (1991), p.33; id., "Early Methodist Societies in south-west Wales", *Trans. Cymmrodorion Soc.* (1996), pp.52-53.
[114] P.P., 1893-94, XXXV1, *The Agricultural Labourer*, Report on the Agricultural Labourer in Wales, under Narberth Union.
[115] *Cambrian News*, 10 July 1869.
[116] Parry Jones, *Welsh country upbringing*, p.23.
[117] See John Gibson's editorial, "Women and the Religion" in *Cambrian News / Welsh Farmers' Gazette*, 16 December 1904, where he views the prominent part played by women in the Revival as one of the most remarkable features of the religious resurgence.
[118] Morgan, *The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Newchurch*, p.31.
[119] Retold incidents reveal the degree of abandonment displayed by some Revivalists. Peggy Bronscawen, for instance, was so renowned for her enthusiasm during the 1859 Revival that she was bribed to keep quiet with a pair of shoes on the occasion of a visit by a timid preacher. As he warmed to his theme in the pulpit, however, she cast off her new footwear and threw them, shouting as she did that she would "rather praise barefoot than to be muzzled wearing any new shoes", Conrad Evans, *The Story of a Parish* (December 1975), p.76.
[120] *Cambrian*, 20 September 1816.

[121] Fred S. Price, *History of Caio, Carmarthenshire* (Swansea, 1904), p.31. Some years earlier Nanci Jones came commonly to be known as "Nani Crugybar" for her devotion and support for the Calvinistic Methodist Church at Crugybar. Ibid., pp.34-35.
[122] Evans, *The Story of a Parish*, p.77.
[123] Evans, *The Story of a Parish*, p.75; see also N.L.W., Bronwydd 3663 for a Deed of Conveyance as directed by the will of Ann Williams bequeathing £100 each to the Dissenting Meeting at St. Thomas' Green, Haverfordwest, and at Keston in the parish of Camrose, Pembrokeshire.
[124] Revd. Gruffydd Evans, "Carmarthenshire Gleanings (Kidwelly)", *Y Cymmorodor,* XXV (1915), p.101.
[125] Revd. Edmund Jones, *A Relation of Apparitions of Spirits in the County of Monmouth and the Principality of Wales* (Newport, 1813), p.172.
[126] See the following chapter on courtship and marriage for a few examples of the divining rituals which were carried out in the hope of finding future partners.
[127] *C.J.*, 1 June 1855.
[128] *C.J.*, 4 June 1852; for a selection of other cases which reached the press, see *C.J.*, 28 November 1856, 23 September 1859, 21 May 1858, 18 February1853, 19 June 1857 and 28 March 1862. Fortune-tellers' forecasts are interesting as far as they give a indication of perceived female aspirations, that is to live like a lady and have plenty of money.
[129] Parry-Jones, *My own folk*, pp.99-106.
[130] David Vincent, "The Decline of the oral tradition in popular culture", in Robert D. Storch, (ed.), *Popular culture and custom in nineteenth-century England* (London, 1982), p. 31. William Hogg was a self-educated poet and shepherd ... as a child his imagination had been formed by the tales, superstitions and ballads recounted by his mother, and their influence was to pervade the prose and poetry he wrote as a child.
[131] Ibid., p.41; this point with reference to women is made in Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, revised reprint, 1994), p.50.
[132] Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, p.81.
[133] *C.J.*, 26 March 1858.
[134] Women are prominent sources in accounts of superstitions and ghostly happenings; see Jones, *A Relation of Apparitions of Spirits, p.*172 ; see also Obelkevich, *Religion and rural society*, pp.300-301. He contends that one of the most superstitious groups in rural society was the domestic and farm servant, the latter being "a byword for ignorance and credulity".
[135] J.T. and A.J. Bagley, *The State and Education in England and Wales, 1833-1968* (London, 1988), p.11.
[136] C.J. Doherty, "Literacy and education in Wales, 1855-1884", (unpublished M.Ed. thesis, University of Wales, 1973), p11.
[137] Altick, Richard D., *The English common reader : a social history of the mass reading public, 1800-1900* (Chicago, 1957), p.170.
[138] *Welshman*, 2 November 1838.
[139] *Welshman*, 1 July 1836.
[140] P.P.,1847, XXV11, *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, p.27.
[141] Aled Jones, *Press, politics and society: A history of journalism in Wales* (Cardiff, 1993), pp.101-102.
[142] Edward Laws, *Little England beyond Wales* (London, 1888), p.412; P.P.,1896, *Royal Commission on Land*, p.648.
[143] Thompson, *Customs in Common*, p.529.

5

Public Life, Protest and Popular Politics

Women's public role

"Nerth gwraig yn ei thafawd"

Be she old, or be she young,

A woman's strength is in her tongue. [1]

To say that women in nineteenth-century south-west Wales lacked a public role would be untrue, but, like many other aspects of their lives, their scope for action outside the home was limited, determined not only by practical concerns regarding their everyday commitments but also by contemporary views filtering down from an influential minority on the place of females in society. Roles available to women mainly occurred in the fields of community caring and philanthropy. Only later did other avenues open up, whereby women could have a voice in local government, sit on management committees, formally voice opinions and contribute to the processes of decision-making, but even these were subject to restrictions, confined as they were to certain domains and applicable to the narrow section of women of middle and lower-upper status. While the skills gained in their charitable fundraising work would have given middle-class women the confidence to step out and gain access to other branches of public life, a shifting emphasis questioning the legitimacy of the female presence outside the home served to restrict the majority of women who appeared, outwardly at least, in danger of losing much of whatever power they had within the community.[2] Nevertheless, women continued to exercise considerable influence within certain areas of communal life, fiercely guarding any threats or infringement to their rights and property, be it moral and

personal or material, and at the same time fighting determinedly to safeguard the interests of the community at large.

Women in the Community

While their presence in community organisation and public affairs, at least outwardly, appeared minor, women nevertheless played significant roles and performed a number of functions within the neighbourhood. Not least amongst them was their contribution to community health care, for within every neighbourhood there were women who could be relied upon for their diagnostic and remedial skills. Traditionally called in to advise, as informal carers of both family and community, they were expected to impart their practical knowledge when health problems or emergencies arose. By doing so, they achieved a special status within their own immediate environment and local hierarchy. The best-known health carer, as discussed in the earlier section on female employment, was the midwife who was called upon to assist births. In her absence, however, expertise would be sought from a neighbouring woman, usually the one with the greatest number of children and who had had the most experience in deliveries. For most women in birth, medical advice was sought only when instrumentation was needed for a difficult labour or in the event of complications during, or after, the delivery. [3]

Professional medical help was generally sparse, especially so in rural areas where greater distances had to be travelled in order to acquire advice or home visits. Although medical officers were appointed in every Union as part of the provision of the 1834 Poor Law Act, the numbers of people within each union, the geographical area which each encompassed, and the expense of employing such people, meant that service was patchy and inconsistent. In the Cardigan Union for instance, with its a population of 20,000, there were only three medical officers appointed in 1845.[4] Witnesses before the Enquiry of 1844 into

the causes of the Rebecca riots bore testimony to the inadequacy of medical resources available to people who, in an emergency, might have to travel 15 miles to fetch a doctor who, himself, could be in another part of the county. [5] Although poor residents in towns fared better with the opening by public subscriptions of dispensaries, as in Carmarthen in 1808 and Pembroke in 1814, medical expertise for the poor continued to remain totally inadequate. [6] In the town of Pembroke Dock there was, in 1854, only one medical man to attend a population of 5,000. [7]

Despite the poor access to medical facilities, there was, anyway, among the lower orders, a distrust of medical opinion even when such help was readily available, for there still existed a faith in traditional remedies to cure illhealth and physical disabilities.[8] Poor people preferred to rely on advice of, and treatment from, quacks, water doctors, druggists and local women than consult practising doctors of medicine. According to William Day, a Poor Law Commissioner, in 1837, even when the parish provided the poor with money to pay for treatment, they preferred to buy potions at the druggist or, more commonly, pay to consult a local quack who would most likely be a woman.[9] Besides those considered knowledgeable in matters of childbirth, within most neighbourhoods there were women noted for their expertise in effecting cures for illnesses, the remedies or procedures for which might well have been handed down, in some cases, for generations.[10] Depending on the nature of the suspected illness, herbs, sometimes grown especially for the purpose, weeds, flowers, trees, animals and any variety of natural ingredients known for their efficacy might be used. Well known by the better off as well as the poor, quacks and such like would be consulted by both to treat common and troublesome ailments or be consulted by the former when medical advice failed. Some specialised in specific types of afflictions or in curing a particular ailment. A Mrs. Lewis, of Westpool, in Carmarthenshire, was renowned for her skill in dealing with traumas,

so it therefore made sense for the Revd. Mathias to seek her advice, when, after being kicked in the face by a horse, he suffered severe bruising and pain. [11]

Given that medical help, especially in thinly populated areas, was scarce, women's role in community healthcare, whether as midwife, bonesetter or herbalist, was of incalculable value, but, despite this, it was under threat, for throughout the nineteenth century their contribution to community care came to be increasingly diminished under a ground-surge of patented medicines and prejudice linked to the rise of male-dominated professions, and the favouring of "conventional" medicine administered by trained doctors. Ointments, pills and tonics were offered for sale through glowing advertisements in the local papers. Promising relief and cures for a vast variety of ailments, these miracle cures, given vivid testimonials by satisfied customers, were available by mail order or listed as available in local druggist shops. One supposed cure, the "Rational Mode of Treatment of Consumption", was advertised as Dr. de Jongh's Light Brown Cod Liver Oil, a remedy said to be conveniently efficacious for all stages of the disease.[12] Potions like Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup which purported to help relieve a whole host of symptoms experienced by sick children, including toothache, stomach ache, wind and dysentry, were advertised in the press as being indispensible to mothers. [13]

At the same time newspapers were quick to report instances where alternatives to official medical help had hindered the recovery of a sufferer.[14] After her daughter failed to respond to treatment dispensed by a local doctor, Hannah Phillips' mother worriedly turned to neighbours for consultations over her daughter's worsening condition. Diagnosing a bad attack of worms, they advised her, instead, to pick the herb bearsfoot, a known cure for the condition. Finding the plant in a neighbour's garden, for she did not grow it herself, she administered it to the child in an infusion of water and sugar as a herbal tea. Vomiting and suffering convulsions, the child died shortly afterwards. At the inquest, the surgeon who had

treated the girl commented on the ignorance of the local people for mis-diagnosing the illness and recommending the treatment which, he said, consisted of acrid vegetable poison which, although once used as a cure for worms, had been replaced by a safer and more effective medicine. That the doctor's treatment of the child was ineffective was not mentioned. [15]

In addition, the press criticised those who sought remedies "that had the sanction of some domestic quack, in the shape of an ignorant and officious old crone".[16] The implications for local women healers were manifold, for not only did their earning capacity lessen in some cases, but they risked losing status within their own neighbourhood. In degrading her role as a healer, a poor woman stood in real fear of being displaced in one of the few positions she could aspire to within the hierarchy of her local community.

Even less respected by the moral middle classes, but more feared by the populace, were the wise women, who, like the so-called cunning men, provided a variety of skills and expertise by setting themselves up as herbalists, fortune-tellers, veterinary and medical doctors and even astrologers to make for themselves, if not a huge fortune, then certainly an adequate income.[17] Using charms, potions, and herbs and not a little psychology, even they played an important role within the community in allaying the health scares, fears and insecurities of a poorly educated and credulous populace who still believed in fairies, ghosts and the power of witchcraft. Besides the enhanced status they would have acquired by dint of their knowledge, superstitious inhabitants would have looked at them with respect, awe and some degree of nervousness.

Unrelated to those who advertised and employed their professed magical and specialist skills was the unfortunate female, who, for perhaps no particular obvious reason found herself thrust into the spotlight of village scrutiny to account, and be blamed, for occurrences which, otherwise, would be unexplained. Lone, elderly women were suspected of practising witchcraft. When the vessel the "Caesar" came to grief at its initial launch at

Pembroke Dock dockyard in July 1853, in front of virtually all the local population, blame was hastily attributed to the curses of Betty Foggy, a woman locally regarded as a witch, who had, for that reason, been denied entry to the event.[18] Fear of the damage witches could cause to animals and crops caused many farmers in south Wales to treat those whom they suspected of practising the black arts, usually old women, with careful, albeit grudging, respect.[19] One supposed witch, "old Margaret", who died in the early 1800s, was said to be the terror of neighbouring farmers in Llandeilo Fawr in Carmarthenshire. It was said that she did so much mischief, that whenever a brewing took place a certain spell was used to prevent her malicious machinations.[20] Just as women could be blamed for unexplained happenings and suspicious occurrences, so there were those, no doubt, who used their reputation as supposed "witches" to maximum effect in order to avail themselves of whatever was offered them. More usual, however, those suspected of witchcraft fared less well, finding themselves, instead, the unfortunate victims of others' expectations (here both the depth and convenience of superstitious feelings might be questioned). For refusing to treat a child suffering from weakness of the back and legs, one unfortunate elderly widow in the village of Talybont, Cardiganshire, who was suspected of being a sorceress, was kicked and pelted with stones by the child's mother and the woman's friend in a response which was fashioned by disappointment at the woman's recalcitrance.[21]

Women's role within the community extended wider than their capacity as healers, or as scapegoats, however, for they attained prominent positions in monitoring neighbours and acquaintances in terms of their sexual morals and marital relations. Wales, like rural Lancashire and other traditional areas, closely mirrored Ireland, where "the preconditions for close supervision of behaviour by the community and for effective sanctioning of those individuals who could not leave it were both met . . . . few actors could easily escape without

serious diminution of life chances from any sanctions which the community's members sought to impose". [22]

Acting as important agents in sustaining gossip channels, women contributed to the policing of moral order in their respective communities, by grouping together to voice disapproval of any corrosion of marital relations, whether instigated by male or female, and even physically dealing with those whom they deemed threats to the moral order. When it came to passing comment on personal relations, be it sexual or marital, they could, as John Gillis has remarked, be far more subtle and, perhaps, more effective than their participation in grievance protests. A few chosen words could indeed wreak havoc with a person's reputation and good standing in a close-knit society. [23] Neither were they silenced by the prevailing ideology of domesticity and separate spheres, with its prescribed codes of what was thought constituted respectable feminine behaviour, language and demeanour. As Rosemary Jones has asserted:

> Far from being passive, downtrodden or voiceless victims, many Victorian women, *including those who outwardly conformed to the images of feminine respectability* . . . were extremely resilient and resourceful. They may have endorsed the domestic ideal, but they often did so largely on their own terms, and continued to deploy a wide range of verbal sanctions as a means of gaining the proverbial "last word", and of negotiating for themselves a marked degree of status and autonomy, both within marriage and the wider patriarchal establishment. [24]

Nowhere were women's words more effective or more vociferous than in the arena of community morality, where they acted as, in E. P. Thompson's words, "Guardians of the institutions of the family".[25]. Far more covert, but immensely effective, their influence in

applying sanctions within their own community achieved far-reaching control. Mindful of their own subordinate positions in a world where marriage was for women the ultimate goal, and to be safeguarded as an institution at all costs, women were most prominent when moral values were threatened. As such they were instrumental in acting against wife beaters, adulterers, bigamists or anyone, either male or female, who sought to threaten, usurp or challenge what they saw as a woman's rightful position within her respective family. In times when a situation demanded immediate action and when words were not enough, they acted together as a physical force to impart their moral judgements and to ensure a swift and satisfactory outcome. In one instance, the plight of a careworn woman who had arrived in the village of Llandybie in Carmarthenshire looking for her husband who had recently taken lodgings in the town after having absconded with his mistress, instigated a fracas whereby the errant couple found themselves at the mercy of a large crowd of women and children. Sympathising with her plight, they assembled outside the lodgings, where an altercation was taking place between the two parties, husband and deserted wife. After hearing the man refuse to return home with her, the women of Llandybie ordered him to accompany his wife, threatening lynch law if he disobeyed. They proceeded to chase him, whereupon, amid hoots, he fled. Not content with this, however, the women then continued to exact retribution by ducking his female companion as a fitting punishment for consorting with a married man. [26] In a similar manner, Aberystwyth women dealt their own brand of justice to a wayward couple who had decided to emigrate together leaving behind the man's lawful wife and five children. Chasing him from the town, the women, along with a crowd of youths and children, then turned their attention onto his female friend by grabbing her and tearing her clothes to pieces. [27]

Central to this "highly autonomous and self-regulatory approach to community affairs", with its "widespread acceptance that the 'private' behaviour of individuals should be

subject to scrutiny by the neighbourhood as a whole", women vigorously instigated and contributed to the operation of shaming rituals, a method traditionally used for blatant and sustained attacks against morality.[28] Known in Wales as the ceffyl pren, the activity has been defined as "a highly ritualised sanction used to punish deviant behaviour" and " serving as an effective moral policing mechanism in the public surveillance of sexual or marital behaviour".[29] The hub of the action centred around a makeshift "wooden horse" on which the offending person or his/her effigy would be carried in procession around the neighbourhood for a number of nights or even weeks accompanied by a large number of people shouting abuse, chanting, hooting and making loud noises on drums, horns, kettles, or whatsoever instrument which could be obtained, in a variant of rough music.

In cases where women instigated the proceedings, men would join the ranks to assist in the shaming rituals by lending their physical strength to manhandle the victim. The jury at Cardiganshire Assizes where ten people were indicted for a riot and assault, heard that John Lloyd had firstly been dragged to the door of his house by three women, who were then assisted by young men who put him onto the "wooden horse" and carried him around the countryside. In this instance, women were to the forefront in the ceffyl pren procedure.[30] In some cases, not only did women instigate actions of ceffyl pren, but were the sole participants. During the turbulent times of the Rebecca riots, in 1843, where moral transgressions were even more conspicuously held up for popular justice, a known wife-beater, a Methodist tailor, was threatened with a ducking in a nearby river, unless his behaviour towards his wife improved, by about 40 women led by one blowing a horn, who congregated near his home in Pontarddulais. [31]

Public Roles and the Public Good

Well-distanced from participating in the very public and physical manifestations of moral policing would have been the wives of prominent landowners and middle-class men. Because of their social standing, such women might be respectfully known in the community for their worthy charity work by donating and raising contributions for the needy.[32] Mrs Gilbertson of Aberystwyth was just one of a number of benefactress who extended the hand of charity towards local concerns. In her case, she provided seasonal fare in the form of a dinner, comprising roast meats, plum pudding and tea, to the inmates of the town's workhouse, an event that was reported with suitable obeisance by the press.[33] Through the auspices of the church and chapel, women took on a host of duties working towards the neighbouring good, most especially in the fields of children's education and the welfare of the poor. Aside from worthy acts to alleviate poverty through clothing clubs, philanthropic societies and individual acts, participation discussed earlier, they sought to improve by supporting education and by example. The more prestigious events held outside their immediate community, such as the annual conferring of degrees at Lampeter college and the Midsummer Examinations at the Carmarthen Presbyterian College, would have concerned a few notable ladies only. Likewise they might be asked to judge certain classes at eisteddfodau. At the National Eisteddfod in Aberystwyth in 1865, Lady Lloyd of Bronwydd, Mrs. Davies of Gogerddan and Mrs. Davies of Mwynwen, were amongst those designated to judge the articles of local manufacture in the industrial art and manufactures section.[34] In general, middle-class women were confined to visiting their local schools and Sunday schools to examine the children's progress, and to organising and attending tea parties and fundraising functions. Two females noted for their charitable works in their own particular neighbourhood were the Misses Davies of Ffosrhydgadel in Cardiganshire, who attracted

great admiration for spending a considerable amount of time superintending the running of the Chancery day school, as well as visiting the needy and sick children of the district.[35] Such women, of course, were expected to fill their time pursuing charitable aims in suitable areas such as education and provision for the poor. The success of one venture held at Llandovery Town Hall, where an exhibition and sale had taken place, with local families of consequence donating examples of their handiwork, prompted an editorial comment that, if each lady would give a certain number of hours towards preparing needlework or drawing for the event the following year, she would achieve great satisfaction and amusement arising from engaging her time for the benefit of helping provide funds for the education of the poor.[36]

To an outside observer, women's role in the community on a formal, official level might have appeared very much restricted. Although visible at various public organisations and gatherings dealing with local concerns, their numbers would have been substantially lower than those of their male counterparts. The main organising mechanism for parish affairs, the Poor Law boards, were overwhelmingly male-dominated, comprising in the main small farmers whose main objective, we have seen, was to keep ratepayers' expenses to a minimum. While women were applauded for their charitable works amongst the poor and needy, few of them were elected, or co-opted, onto parish poor law boards, and there did seem to be some doubt as to whether they were actually legally eligible to serve. Not only did the property stipulation act against women, who were less likely to own the means for entry, but even those who had the necessary qualifications were likely to be hampered by age, illness, or children. Even if persuaded to go forward, their participation was jeopardised by prejudiced male voters dissuading others to elect a female candidate, and, if elected, they often had to contend with male hostility. [37]

When a Mrs. Ann Price successfully passed the list of voters in the parish of Llandefaelog Tre'r graig in Breconshire to become an overseer of the parish, it was considered sufficiently newsworthy to be reported in the newspaper, which pointedly explained her appointment on the grounds that there was an absence of married men in the community to fill the vacancy. [38] When women were elected to serve, usually only widows or spinsters could fulfil the criteria to stand, for it was not deemed suitable for married women to take office as they came under the sovereignty of their husbands. This can be amply illustrated by the overseership of St Ishmael, which, in 1837, came to be invested in the hands of two females, one a widow and the other the wife of a master of a coastal trading vessel. While little was remarked upon the appointment of the former, an editorial in the Liberal *Welshman* newspaper questioned the eligibility of married women with husbands still living to serve, at the same time cynically suggesting that the magistrates responsible for approving the appointment should allow their own wives, who after all would be, by association, well steeped in the law, to be elected as the next overseers. [39] Hence a typical representation of women might be that which comprised the membership of the Llangyfelach and Llanguicke Association, a local organisation set up to safeguard community security by prosecuting felons against property crimes committed in the area. Of the thirty-three members, comprising ratepayers of the parish, only two were women. [40]

Nor did women's position improve significantly after 1870, during which time they became eligible to stand for election onto school boards. Despite approval for their involvement in the sphere of education, they were, nonetheless, hardly encouraged onto the boards, which remained overwhelmingly dominated by men. The only woman standing in a first election of candidates in Pembroke and Pembroke Dock, where inter-community rivalries coloured the proceedings and outcome, came last out of the seventeen contesting nine seats. [41]

Outside their activities associated with their everyday life and tasks, the chapel or church remained one of the few places permitted to women in south-west Wales, and religion provided one of the few opportunities for them to participate and express themselves. [42] Even here, however, there were limits to their affiliation and involvement, and, so firmly was a woman's role embedded in domesticity, that the perceived dereliction of this duty could be employed against them as a convenient slur whenever it was thought necessary. Hence, for attending a public meeting in Carmarthen in July 1845 of an evangelical sect called the Princeites, ladies were singled out for especial censure for thinking that their duties lay "in netting souls instead of knitting or darning their husband's stockings". [43]

Nevertheless it has been said that Methodism allowed women to achieve a parity with male members, at least to the extent where they were encouraged to share their spiritual experiences by recounting openly in prayer meetings and classes. [44] Yet even while it was considered eminently suitable for them to show their religious fervour and devoutness by attending sermons and services, the opportunity to participate actively in other activities within the church or chapel was denied them. Colourful metaphors expressed prevalent contemporary views on women attaining any sort of ascendancy within the church or chapel culture. Sayings such as " ... chapels contained vixens and foxes – the latter should be in the pulpit and the former in the pews", and ". . .did not want the Gospel preached in Crinoline", accurately represented male attitudes towards women attaining public office or indeed any highly-visible role within the orbit of religion. [45]

The management of a chapel's affairs was exclusively male, run through the auspices of the Diaconate, and while it was likely that more women than men observed religious worship and attended the prayer meetings, bible readings and other activities organised by the chapel, nevertheless it was men who actually gave the addresses and readings, spoke about their experiences and comprised the dominant vocal presence within the congregation. The

very few women who did rise to positions of prominence within the chapel culture could even have been considered "oddities". [46] Indeed, by the nineteenth century, female voices in the Methodist chapel may well, according to Eryn Mant White, have been less evident than those of their eighteenth-century counterparts who attended experience meetings, having fallen victim to the twin forces of institutionalisation and respectability.[47] Women, she argues, were given a predominant role in organising, when barns and farmhouses were used by the Methodist societies as meeting places, but this receded after 181I, when the movement became denominational and proceedings were formalised. [48] The odd occasion to the contrary when women were allowed additional involvement, proves illuminating. At a meeting of the Llandovery Baptist Association in the summer of 1846, following an early morning sermon outdoors it was granted "for once" that pious women could, if they so wished, attend a private meeting for the ordination of five young ministers in the chapel. There was no shortage of womenfolk taking up the offer, for a large number congregated in the gallery, this instance affording ample proof that it was the denial of opportunity to participate, rather than an unwillingness on their part, which saw them usually unrepresented at similar functions. [49]

While women were excluded from church activities, in an official or governing sense, they were, however, encouraged to participate in its peripheral activities. A church's or chapel's festivals and special events saw its more notable female members becoming heavily involved in proceedings. Individually or as a group, they arranged decorations and organised activities to be held, sometimes unofficially competing with other denominations in the area for the best show or display. [50] Ladies' committees were set up specifically concerned with organising social activities designed to raise funds. [51] At a time when much structural work was being carried out, they helped to support undertakings like the construction of new places of worship by wholeheartedly throwing themselves into arranging fund-raising events such as

bazaars and tea parties. They attended ceremonies, such as commemorating the laying of foundation stones, and, as guests, officially opened new buildings, amidst a host of other attendant functions. Regarded as one of the principal supporters of the building of St Mary's Church in Aberystwyth, Miss Mary Morice was happy to be given the honour of laying the foundation stone for its new building.[52] Certain ladies within a neighbourhood became well known for their community spirit and organising skills. In the parish of Mallwyd, further afield in Merionethshire, a stalwart supporter was Mrs. Buckley of Plas Dinas, who, at Christmas 1867, not only took on the task of decorating the church with festive greenery, but also played the organ for both the Christmas day services in the Church. The previous Monday afternoon she had also officiated, in her capacity as a chief benefactor, at the Sunday School's children's party, after first attending a meeting in the Vestry for the distribution of clothing to members of the associated clothing club. [53]

For those women committed to organising and preparing community and other activities, such tasks as organising, cleaning, preparing food and decorating were largely extensions of their normal roles within the household. There was nevertheless division in the work done at events for invisible barriers of social standing convincingly separated the various tasks allotted to women. At chapel functions, for instance, while it was considered the responsibility of the farmers' wives and daughters to serve the tables, in the process vieing amongst each other for the top honour of serving the minister, cottagers' wives and families, meanwhile, were allotted the subsidiary backround tasks of tending the fire, boiling water and washing the dishes. [54]

By providing recreation for others and helping provide the refreshments for these various fundraising and celebratory events, festivities and competitions, it is a matter of debate if such activities could legitimately constitute part of these females' own leisure time.[55] An added pressure would have been the inevitable opportunities for "status

evaluation", which Malcolmson maintains would have resulted from these so-called recreational activities.[56] Both helpers and organisers of public events could be either taken to task or praised for the efforts made within their own individual fields. For women, especially, public opinion would have been brought to bear on their housewifery and food preparation skills, both considered vital female attributes, which, if seen to be absent, would substantially damage a woman's status with her neighbours. [57]

Notwithstanding the social pressures such activities brought, women's importance as providers should not be underestimated, for it endowed them with elements of power which could, in turn, allow them to effect change and shape future actions. A convincing argument forwarded for the decline in celebratory harvest feasts, for instance, states that it was partially due to the reluctance of the farmer's wife to organise the catering. In parts of England, the widening gulf between farmers and their staff manifested itself in the disinclination of the wife to be burdened with the organising and the preparing of food and drink customary in such celebrations. The demise of the feasting following the carrying of the "horkey load" at the end of the harvest in Suffolk in favour of a cash payment to each worker, was, for instance, attributed to the farmers' wives, who, it was said, wanted " to avoid the trouble of so much cooking".[58] In the more prosperous agricultural valleys of south Wales, it was quite likely a similar case would have prevailed.

Allied to women's church activities were the Ladies Bible Associations which became established in a number of locations in south-west Wales in the first half of the nineteenth century. Narberth, Tenby and Milford were only a few towns joining up in response to representations by members of the British and Foreign Bible Societies who toured the area lecturing in various town halls. Supported by a number of females who expressed interest in forming their own branches, tuition was given in the running of

branches, and female committees were formed to organise and manage the charitable works and bible distribution that became a major feature of the association. [59]

Closely related to nonconformity was the temperance movement. Although in the early years of the movement's inception female involvement, in comparison to men's, was limited, women were nevertheless encouraged to participate and came to be heavily numbered among its membership. Early teetotal meetings, such as those held in the Townhall at Carmarthen in 1838, were attended by females who sat quietly to listen and give their support, and in doing so "protect a righteous cause, by their genial, their silent, their acknowledged influence". [60] Although attracting women from all stations in the community, it seems that they played little part in both the movement's management and day-to-day organisation. Forty-four per cent of the membership of the Aberystwyth Auxilliary Temperance Society in the period 1836-55 comprised women, ranging from servants to ministers' wives, yet there is little evidence to suggest that any of these sat on the society's management committee.[61] The occupations of all committee members for the year 1855-56, for instance, were exclusively male-orientated and included ministers of religion, two druggists, two schoolmasters, a bookseller, two drapers, a shoemaker, a cabinet maker, two captains, a printer, a currier, a land surveyor, a plasterer, a foundry man, a master mariner and a watch maker. An earlier committee list for 1850 indicates a similar pattern. [62] What little influence women had lay within the separate ladies section of temperance societies and involved local ladies of high social standing. In Lampeter, for instance, it was the wife of J. Battensby Harford, Esq., of Falcondale, who liaised with the National Temperance League. [63]

While only perhaps involved to a certain degree in the Temperance movement, at least in these early days public-spirited and reforming women in south-west Wales, if only by dint of hearing visiting speakers conduct public lectures on issues surrounding the movement, were introduced to the potential of increased female participation and the scope to widen their

individual horizons.[64] In 1850 in Cardigan, for instance, Mrs. Stamp, a clergyman's widow from Manchester, gave a lecture at the Bethany Chapel, and delivered a later one at Capel Mair.[65] On another occasion a Mrs. Theobald was instrumental in giving one of two lectures at the Assembly Rooms in Carmarthen in 1858, only to return once more in 1862 to give an oration on abstinence at the Assembly rooms in the town. [66] Not that such visits were anticipated with approval in male quarters. In 1859, for example, an oration due to be delivered on teetotalism by a Miss Jessie Craigen of London, under the auspices of the Carmarthen Temperance Society, caused not a little concern, not for the unpopularity of the topic but because the speaker was female. Armed with this knowledge, it was anticipated that her reception would be cool, but in the event she was, instead, reported as having riveted the attention of her audience for upwards of two hours and was met with great applause.[67] In general, attitudes towards women holding highly visible roles, such as public speaking, were downright hostile unless they delivered approved topics designed to uplift morality. A spokeswoman addressing a lecture on the Latter Day Saints at the Baptist Chapel at Llandybie in December 1854 on the rights of women to preach and preside over meetings was resoundingly criticised later in the local press with a comment stating that she would have been better employed staying at home attending to duties more becoming to her sex. [68] The few women who did enter the public arena by giving addresses nevertheless attracted large audiences, the numbers undoubtedly being swelled by the novelty value of listening to a female speaker. Chosen subjects lectured on were confined to prescriptive tracts and included educating women on how to be a good wife and mother, the importance of Christian values and giving children healthy, moral and religious upbringings. A Miss Rebecca Evans from Mathry in Pembrokeshire gave a series of lectures in the 1860s in aid of funds for Baptist chapels in a number of venues in south-west Wales. Speaking at Llandeilo in August 1865, she lectured to a packed chapel on "The Hearth Stone", based on the role of mothers and the

conduct of wives, and gave a similar one, lasting two hours and entitled "the School of the Hearth", at Llanfynydd in Carmarthenshire, later in the year.[69] 1857 saw the Capel Newydd literary and temperance society in Llanelli hold its first meeting on Christmas day. The Rev. Thomas from Llandeilo presided, the choir sang, prayers were read and Miss Bowen and Miss Lewis held a conference on "The Drunkard's wife "and "The Landlady of the Inn".[70] It had been noted that many of those emigrating from the English countryside due to low employment opportunities were regular churchgoers, for reasons that " these are precisely the men and women who have had courage enough to think for themselves".[71] The most noteworthy female for her influence in the field of temperance and as an editor and writer of the monthly periodical for women, *Y Frythones*, was Miss Sarah Jane Rees (Cranogwen), who came to prominence despite her comparatively humble upbringing as a ship captain's daughter from Llangrannog in Cardiganshire. Well versed in lecturing, she was commended for her "masterly" style, and for pleasing her large audiences with her addresses. [72]

Women in Protest

It could well be said that women's best known acts of protest, in the historical context, were those involving food rioting. That 1795 has been coined the "Year of the Housewife" directly relates to their involvement in such activities. [73] However, the extent of women's role in food riots has been a matter of some deliberation and lively debate amongst historians.[74] Especially contentious have been the questions of exactly what role they played and how prominent they were in such riots. Certainly the episodes of food rioting in Wales, which occurred periodically throughout the eighteenth century and were to continue well into the first decades of the nineteenth, featured women regularly amongst the rioters, and it has been contended that they participated in the action especially in the context of encouraging and inciting men to further action. [75] Like the evidence elsewhere, however, it remains

difficult for the historian to determine what proportion of the rioters were female, especially since contemporary observers commonly used collective nouns when describing such incidents, and by doing so appeared to render women absent. Fortunately E. P. Thompson has drawn our attention to the confusion that has arisen over the use of these collective words over time. For example, the word "mob", which today might evoke a masculine presence, would have, in the past, been a term to describe a crowd composed of men, women and older children. [76]

In times of harvest failure and shortage with its attendant reliance on the distribution of imported barley and other scarcities, queues of men, women and children would form at quaysides when it became known that vessels were expected with supplies.[77] Crowds congregated at the quayside at Haverfordwest in late 1854, for instance, when a ship carrying a consignment of culm (a cheap coal derivative used by the poor), making up for shortages resulting from the stopping of the Little Haven Colliery, was docked. Within an hour and a half most was distributed in quantities varying from one penny to a shilling's worth to the waiting crowds. [78] Much of the anguish felt at such times fell to wives and mothers who were responsible in their domestic roles for putting adequate fare forward for their families. When they felt unfairly treated, they displayed their angst by joining the rioting.

Writing on corn riots in the period 1793-1801, a period notable for the numerous incidents of such riots within the Principality, David Jones states that the regular appearance of women was "one of the most notable features of the riots" and cites instances, as in 1793, when they marched from Llangyfelach to Swansea, and in 1800, when they marched from Llangadog to Beaufort, in which they were "amongst the most vocal and extreme members" of the mob. [79] Eyewitness evidence in at least one riot in south-west Wales bears out Jones' statement. In the butter riots in Haverfordwest in 1795, women were not only instrumental in inciting the colliers to riot but were the perpetrators of violent behaviour. John Philipps of

Williamston, himself a victim of their wrath, described the crowds of men, women and children as they came down the main thoroughfare heading towards the river where a sloop loaded with butter was bound for the Port of Bristol. Armed with bludgeons, the crowd shouted, as they went, "One and all, one and all". While trying to stop some of the men by warning them of possible imprisonment, shooting or hanging, our witness, a magistrate himself, was harangued by some of the women who, while still continuing to incite the men to carry on, acted like "perfect Furies", by striking him repeatedly on his back until warded off by his servant. [80] In another incident of food rioting in Spring 1801 at Swansea, it was only women and children who were mentioned as having marched towards the doors of a warehouse and, having broken them open, demanded corn. The two ringleaders later arrested for the riot were both female. [81]

Nor were women afraid to issue threatening messages, for during the butter riots already mentioned a woman was heard to threaten, "yet in a less time than a Twelvemonth, she should see the Downfall of all the Clergy and of every Rich Person", and, sometime afterwards, some threatened that "they would have fresh butter as well as the Gentry and would live as well as the Gentry". [82] These strong words, motivated by hunger and anger, were directed at the ruling classes but, as will be claimed later, probably lacked any real serious intent. [83] Whether they were actively involved themselves, inciting the men, or merely sympathetic by-standers, women were not afraid to arouse the wrath of the authorities. Perhaps there is truth in the assumptions made by some historians that women felt safe in the belief that they would not be harmed. That the two arrested ringleaders involved in the Swansea corn riots of 1801 were allowed to escape by members of the Swansea Independent Volunteers who had charge of the prisoners, might have been the outcome expected.[84]

In acting so provocatively, women could have been drawing on the deeply rooted carnival tradition whereby traditional notions of women as "unruly" and needing male authority were overturned in favour of allowing them the licence to voice grievances, and, by doing so, "defend the community interests and standards, and to tell the truth about unjust rule".[85] By relying on the leniency afforded them as women they were capable of both attacking unpopular authority figures in confrontational manner and slyly cajoling those placed in positions of power for sympathy, as did the women in Haverfordwest when they directed their pleas to the common soldiers, saying "that they knew they were in their Hearts for them and would do them no hurt".[86] Indeed the evidence, although inconclusive, suggests that women were less likely to be arrested than men for instances of riot and disorder. Of the 103 persons arrested, indicted and convicted of rioting in Wales for the period 1793 to 1801, only 14, or 13.6 per cent, for instance, were women.[87] And even when convicted they could expect lesser sentences. Rachel James was among four women imprisoned for two calendar months for their part in a riot at Fishguard in 1827 over the export of corn, while the men convicted alongside them received three months' imprisonment each. [88]

Whether women's role in food protests and riots was prominent or not, and whatever their underlying convictions that caused them to disregard the law and defy the authorities so flagrantly, what *is* apparent is that women continued to check and monitor the food prices in the market place long after food riots had ceased and that they were not afraid to act when they perceived other injustices in the price of food. Women buying at country town markets voiced their disapproval by boycotting stallholders whom they perceived to be taking advantage of shortages by charging more. As late as the First World War, for instance, when farmers' wives were demanding high prices for their butter at Haverfordwest market, that is, before the introduction of price controls in November 1916 curbed the worst excesses, the women of nearby Llangwm refused to buy it until the prices were reduced. [89]

That the event was considered sufficiently newsworthy to feature prominently in the subsequent issue of the *Pembrokeshire Telegraph* with a description and a poem might testify somewhat to its unusualness; nevertheless, this does not diminish women's longstanding awareness and knowledge of market prices, or their vigilance and quickness to assert their rights as consumers to boycott goods which they perceived as overpriced.

Food riots and disturbances over the price of food represented only one of a number of causes which saw women driven to protest. A notable feature of rural Wales for much of the first half of the nineteenth century was the widespread social unrest caused by high prices, depression and mounting unemployment, all unwanted legacies from the Napoleonic Wars that compounded already existing problems caused by a rising population outstripping a stationary resource bank. Food shortages, rent increases, ejectments, or purely fear and anxiety, both justified and imagined, needed little fuel to flare up into conflagrations which were conducted on both individual and community levels. Enclosing common land was aggravation enough. Although few in terms of number, they nevertheless occurred more frequently and were seemingly more turbulent in Wales in comparison to similar incidents in England. [90] There can be no mistaking the strong feelings that they aroused in Wales and the consequent participation of whole communities, including women whose behaviour was confrontational to say the least. [91] Directly affected by what was a very real threat to their means of subsistence through the restricting of such traditional activities as the collecting and gathering of wool, kindling and peat from off the open commons and wastes, there can be no doubt that women were incensed by enclosures and retaliated by bearing "arms" and marching on officials. A number of incidents bear witness to their furious intervention. David Jones writes of one encounter during the Cardiganshire enclosure riots where, in what was described as being akin to "a rolling torrent", a crowd of women brandishing dripping pans descended on enclosure officials and threatened them with a pit that had been dug

specifically for those who were thought to be denuding their rights. [92] Again, when it was realised that their customary rights were being eroded as a result of enclosures in the 1820s, it was the turn of female fuel sellers and rush collecting hatters, who were apparently amongst the loudest of the protesters in a violent dispute which saw property ripped up and set on fire and animals maimed. Voicing their intentions to ignore the laws on property acquisition, the most vociferous of the hatters were arrested, convicted and received sentences of six months' imprisonment. [93]

Women's resistance did not rest solely on violent retaliatory behaviour, however, for at least one incident illustrates that some women, at least, were aware of the procedures and documentation that had to be administered before enclosures could take place and used this knowledge to challenge the right to enclose. An enclosure riot in June 1809 at Llanfihangel Abercowyn in Carmarthenshire, which saw spinster Mary Rees, along with two yeomen and a carpenter, named as rioters, was the culmination of two months of direct action to prevent owner, Rees William Thomas, from fencing his new property. When resentments threatened to spill over on the nineteenth day of the month, a reading of the Riot Act and the appearance of twelve military recruits from Laugharne failed to disperse the protesters. At the height of the resistance, a female, Mrs. Nancy Brigstock, the mother of one of the men subsequently arrested for riot, spoke for the protesters, demanding to see documents pertaining to the enclosure, arguing meanwhile that a copy she had previously viewed was invalid for not showing a printer's name. [94] The subsequent actions of the protesters, that is whether to fight on or desist, appeared to rest very much on the woman's judgement as to the authenticity of documentation that she asked to be displayed. It is unknown how she came to be so prominent amongst the rioters, but it can be surmised by her levels of literacy that she enjoyed a certain rank or status within the community, which thus invested her with the necessary authority to act. Resistance was only eventually quelled by the arrival of men from

the second and third battalion of the local militia of the county, and the cavalry of the neighbourhood. [95]

When their actual homes were at risk, women were more than willing to resort to extreme measures in their struggles to defend them and by doing so they closely resembled their Scottish counterparts who, at around the same period, fought in the Highland Clearance riots, where they " inspired feats of heroism" in the desperate defence of their homes by forming the front line ahead of their men folk.[96] In similar fashion, a party of men received more than they bargained for when proceeding to rip up the hedges enclosing land that had been enclosed by the owner of a ty unnos (one-night-house) in the parish of Blaenafon, Cardiganshire, after a court order authorised that the property was part of a sheep walk owned by the Earl of Lisburne. The defendant's wife, supported by other females, protected the property by assaulting them with stones and clods of earth, and, in doing so, successfully halted the operation. Undefeated by force of arms but wrong in the eyes of the law, a court appearance at Llanilar petty sessions resulted in the women being fined and bound to keep the peace.[97] Yet another incident - if outside our area - serves to further illustrate women's wrath in the defence of their homes. Squatters' wives, threatened with the destruction of their homes on Cardiff Heath in June 1799, were described as acting like "Amazons", as, armed with pitchforks, they resisted the advances of officials who, unable to proceed with the evictions, had to send for the Caerphilly Volunteers to help. [98]

The lawlessness exhibited against enforcements and evictions was similar, albeit less turbulent, to the type of behaviour that accompanied unpopular actions on the part of those in authority. A mob involving a fair proportion of women, for instance, attacked excise officers at Llanon in Cardiganshire as they searched for malt spirit and contraband goods, pelting them with stones and actually knocking the collector off his horse.[99] Such actions, taken by groups of women on a collective basis against what they saw as injustice, merely replicated

those many actions taken by individual females to safeguard their rights. Singly, women stood firm to defend their actions and property. Elizabeth Edwards used a variety of means to prevent woodman, Charles Macarther, and his assistant from pulling down a hedge which her family claimed as their property but which enclosed a section of a sheep walk near the village of Cwmnewidion. Wielding a pick, she struck Macarther on the ankle, aimed a blow at his horse's head, and threw hot water over the other man. [100] Especially hated were the bailiffs, land agents and their bullies who hounded bankrupt families by distraining for rent and grabbing livestock, implements and anything of worth, whatever its value. A frequent event in south-west Wales, their appearance on a homestead inevitably produced fearful, angry retaliation from women whose first priority lay in safeguarding their property and belongings. A typical reaction might well have been that of Anne Davies of Lampeter who, immediately after espying bailiff David Jones enter her premises, grabbed a pitchfork and threatened to run it through him if he dared to touch anything. When he ignored her orders, she commenced hitting him forcefully with the handle until he departed empty-handed. [101]

Again, fracas involving market officials and female stallholders were not infrequent occurrences. Although toll collectors paled into insignificance next to bailiffs and land agents, they were undoubtedly unpopular figures capable of arousing women to commit acts of violence; in the process they used anything they could lay their hands upon to equal the superior strength of their male adversaries, even, if necessary, using and despoiling their own wares. One unsuspecting market lessee at Carmarthen was distinctly disadvantaged when a woman trader, annoyed at having to pay the unpopular 2d. toll, lost her temper and threw her basket of eels over him. [102]

Individual women were not afraid, when they believed they had a just cause, to use legal means to take authority figures to task, issuing law suits if they thought it necessary. When outcomes were unsatisfactory and considered miscarriages of justice, however, pleas

for rough justice were easily uttered. "The best remedy is to give him a good shaking – shake him inside and out, the rascal", were the words of one toll holder whose case against a market collector for taking her cakes in lieu of toll was thrown out of the magistrates' court as being better heard in the county court. [103] Collectively and publicly women could exert a powerful and shaming influence, which could easily undermine male masculinity and thus their authority. Especially vulnerable to female words of scorn and derision, of course, were those holding public positions. The poor market toll official trod a perilous course in the execution of his duty, for confrontation with women stall holders risked public humiliation and loss of status and pride. The redoubtable Llangwm fish sellers soon put paid to one overzealous toll collector at Haverfordwest market in 1851 when he determinedly demanded toll. Refusing to pay and holding their ground even when their fish was hurled onto the street, they met any challenges he put forward, to the lengths of accepting his offer of settling it by a fighting bout. Amidst the clapping and biting sarcasm of gathering crowds, the man had no option but to concede defeat by hastily retreating, an action which opened the way for the women to take possession of the market place. [104]

Yet, *besides openly defiant and aggressive direct action, women behaved more* covertly in silent protest against unpopular taxes and tariffs by using stealth and furtive, deceitful ruses to trick authority figures. Bailiffs, excise and revenue officers and police constables who represented higher authority took the brunt of women's deceit. When hiding smuggled contraband of gin and tobacco from searching revenue officers, women in Newport, Pembrokeshire, used the traditional female trick of feigning imminent childbirth or at least advanced pregnancy in the hope that male authority figures would beat a retreat from such a traditionally female-orientated concern.[105] Female relatives of poachers were also adept at concealing evidence as well as being experts in obstructing searches by using diversionary tactics, when necessary, to avoid detection.[106] When offering fish and fowl for

sale, they were rehearsed in giving evasive answers to parry any awkward questions that might be asked and, if necessary, would blatantly lie. A cool but untruthful reply given by one old woman, when asked when the out-of-season fresh salmon she offered for sale was killed, was "Killed sir! Why last summer, of course." [107]

While an active female presence was felt in community disputes, public protests and the various riots occurring in the early decades of the nineteenth century, women were surprisingly restrained in the rural revolt of 1842-43 famously known as the Rebecca Riots. They were certainly relegated to a far more subordinate role within Rebecca where, ironically, the notion of role inversion manifested itself most obviously in its male membership as rioters perhaps sought to legitimise their deviant behaviour by disguising themselves in women's clothing. Secretive and subversive by nature, with its emphasis on direct and violent action, the nocturnal activities saw a remarkable absence of female participants. Moreover they were seemingly excluded from any decision making within the Rebecca movement. A resolution passed in the secret meeting of Rebecca's followers at Cwm Ifor, near Llandeilo, in July 1843, stated:

> That a committee of privy council must be held when necessary, and all persons under the age of eighteen are not admitted. Neither woman nor any of the female sex shall be introduced into this selected assembly, except Rebecca and Miss Cromwell.[108]

That women's main contribution to Rebecca lay in providing a female symbol to head the movement can be borne out by their absence in written accounts of incidents and by the rarity of their court appearances for interconnected crimes.[109] Only a few such cases refer to women featuring amongst demonstrators, although these very exceptions give the lie to Rebecca being a male-only preserve, at least in terms of direct action. Demonstrators

congregating before the attack on Carmarthen workhouse in 1843, for instance, were preceded by a band of women, many yielding brushes with which they threatened to sweep away the foundations of the workhouse, while young inmate, Frances Evans, became so caught up in the excitement generated by the protest that she led the Rebecca-ites through the hated institution, dancing on tables in some crazed act of defiance.[110] Apprehended at Cilgwyn-uchaf, Llannewydd, she was taken before the magistrates to be bailed to appear at the forthcoming Assizes. Again, when the tollhouse at Pontarddulais was destroyed, a 63-year-old woman, along with her husband and 25-year-old daughter, Margaret, were imprisoned pending trial at a Special commission at Cardiff. At the subsequent hearing the younger woman alone received a custodial sentence of six months duration.[111] Women, too, as David Jones emphasises, were sometimes present in those attacks that Rebecca's children made on the hated bailiffs.

If they played but a limited role in Rebecca's activities, at the same time, women were quick to act against known informers of Rebecca, as David Griffiths found to his cost when being driven to and from a magistrates' hearing at St Clears in 1843. For, in reaping a reward of £100 by informing on two men whom he had seen destroying a tollgate and house as part of the mob, he incurred the wrath of the local womenfolk and their children in both Carmarthen and St Clears. Congregating alongside the road near to where he was being driven past in an open carriage, they furiously hooted, hissed and pelted him with stones in open disapproval of his betrayal. [112]

Exclusion from the inner workings of Rebecca did not mean that women were immune to, or lived in isolation from, the strong feelings aroused by perceived injustices meted out to the farmers and their families in south Wales. Contemporary witnesses testify as to the strength of feeling harboured among the Welsh womenfolk towards the problems that beset the countryside. They featured, for instance, amongst the reputed 800 to 1,000

persons present at a public meeting of freehold farmers and workmen convened, in the late summer of 1843, on common land in the parish of Llanguicke neighbouring the Black Mountains for the purpose of airing grievances. Listening intently to what was being said, the women, according to the English gentlemen present at the time, far from being merely curious, appeared to take as much interest in the proceedings as their male colleagues, and it was stated that in doing so they displayed a "peculiarity in the character of society in Wales".[113] Obviously, English middle-class notions of how women should think and act had far from become embedded by this time in Welsh rural society, at least in so far as social protest was concerned.

Given the rural nature of south-west Wales, it is hardly surprising that women were absent from any of the political activism that featured so prominently in the industrialising areas of the Principality. The growth of the working-class movement of Chartism in the industrial south-east during the 1830s and 1840s saw women there rally to the cause with the establishment of their own societies, within which they acted in co-operation with male Chartists by adopting their own methods of protest. They showed disapproval to those disloyal to the cause by dealing only with sympathetic tradesmen and shopkeepers, organised petitions, fundraised, attended public meetings and generally demonstrated a bold stance, even in the face of violence. Little evidence is forthcoming that similar activity was demonstrated in the west of the country, although a Chartist presence was evident in Carmarthen. [114] In a period that, anyway, saw women gradually withdrawing from a visible and active participation in radical politics, women in rural areas, not surprisingly, appeared the least politicised and most conservative amongst the population in Wales.[115]

Their one possible vehicle that could have been harnessed for potential collective action, that is, friendly societies, acted predominantly as an agent ensuring against incapacity and sickness. And even when women were driven to react, their protest was always more a

reaction to perceived injustice such as enclosures and the withholding of food than an attempt to organise politically. Ann Lewis' participation in a strike of flannel weavers in Carmarthen in 1853 for an increase in wages, a demand vigorously opposed by the master, was merely that of inflamed combatant. When attacking Llanstephan weaver, William Williams, who was thought to have worked "at the master's price", she was simply retaliating to the decision of the flannel weavers' employer which went against the interests of the strikers and their already distressed families. [116]

Conservative and reactionary by nature, in times of war women exhibited their strong sense of patriotism against threatening invaders from overseas and were prepared to be confrontational in defence of their homelands. Henry Addington, first Viscount Sidmouth, received a petition from the women of Neath, for example, in 1803, in response to rumours they had heard about a French invasion. The townswomen requested permission:

> "to defend ourselves as well as the weaker women and children amongst us. There are in the town about 200 women who have been used to hard labour all the days of their lives *such as working in coal pits, on the high roads, tilling the ground etc. If you* would grant us arms, that is light pikes . . . we do assure you that we could, in a short time learn our exercise". [117]

This powerful entreaty to arms was not surprising considering the animosity that was extended towards French prisoners after their abortive invasion of Pembrokeshire in 1797. Country women there were said to be "more clamorous than the men, making signs to cut their throats", and the apparent bravery of Jemima Nicholas when confronting the invaders is celebrated even to the present day. [118] Intensely defensive, loyal and fiercely conservative, it was a woman who threw a missile at Unitarian preacher Thomas Evans who, in 1797, was

pilloried at Carmarthen, having been convicted for having Jacobin sympathies after singing the Marseillaise or the French Carmagnole in a cwrw bach at Brechfa. [119]

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[1] Vaughan, *Welsh Proverbs with English translations* no.580, p.81.

[2] J Hannam, "Women and Politics", in June Purvis, (ed.), *Women's History: Britain, 1850 –1945, an introduction* (London, 1995), p.222.

[3] N.L.W. MS. 12165D: Observations on Parturition Amongst the Poor in the Upper District of Cardiganshire; written by a doctor, Richard Williams, in the 1830s, the manuscript allows the reader insight into the nursing management and care of a woman in childbirth. Having possibly ingested purgatives to bring on the labour (it appears no coincidence that many working women went into labour on a Sunday, the normal rest day), during the child's delivery the pregnant women would be given copious amounts of gin or other liquor to dull the pain she would undoubtedly experience. Favoured positions adopted for the birth depended on individual preference and might include standing, leaning over the back of the chair or kneeling, although the medical profession advocated a bed delivery. After the birth, the mother would be given a bowl of "bwdram", that is, gruel containing spices and more gin, and a purgative of salts, senna or castor oil the following day. The baby, meanwhile, who would have been washed and dressed and its umbilical cord wrapped in burnt rag, would be fed a mixture of butter with gruel or sugar until put to the breast. Depending on her health and particular circumstances, the mother would gradually recommence her household duties from the third day after the birth and would continue breastfeeding for several years until the child was at least two (or perhaps three or four if another conception was not desired). See also Emyr Wyn Jones, "Medical Glimpses of Early Nineteenth Century Cardiganshire", *The National Library of Wales Journal*, X1V (1965-66), pp.253-275.

[4] *C.J.*, 28 February 1845. Medical provision in the Tregaron union was described as "very faulty" by the same William Day. Only one doctor was available to attend the sick and he was often incapacitated by gout.

[5] P.P., 1844, XV1, *Commission of Inquiry,* pp.107, 283.

[6] *Cambrian,* 4 December 1813; see also Conway Davies, "Aspects of Poor law provision in Carmarthenshire prior to 1834", in *Dangerous Diversity*, p.118.

[7] *C.J.*, 23 June 1854.

[8] *C.J.*, 24 August 1849.

[9] Conway Davies, "Aspects of Poor Law provision in Carmarthenshire prior to 1834", in *Dangerous Diversity*, p.117.

[10] For an account of Welsh wise women near Pendine, see D L Baker Jones, " A Victorian Childhood", *The Carmarthenshire Historian*, X111 (1976), p.11.

[11] Ibid.

[12] *C.J.*, 6 March 1863.

[13] *Cambrian News*, 21 August 1869.

[14] *C.J.*, 4 January 1856, 11 December 1846, 4 January 1856, 26 February 1864; see also *C.J.*, 18 April 1856 for a case whereby a female farmservant of Abergwilly took an infusion of aconite (monkshood) which had been recommended to her by another girl. The coroner at her inquest used her example to impress on farmers, their families and farmservants the dangers of taking herbs and vegetables on the advice of quack doctors and old women.

[15] *C.J.*, 23 April 1852. As is often the case, the many instances of correct diagnoses and successful treatments go unrecorded. The above example had a tragic ending where the sufferer died. Local remedies came to be viewed as ineffective if not downright dangerous and newpapers avidly recounted details of inquests on cases of this type. See also *C.J.*, 28 June 1850.

[16] *C.J.*, 19 December 1845.

[17] For a discussion on cunning or wise men and women, see the article by Owen Davies, "Cunning-folk in England and Wales during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries", in *Rural History*, 8,1 (1997), pp. 91-107.

[18] Phil. Carradice, *Welsh Shipwrecks in Camera* (Whittlebury, 1993), p.42.

[19] *Welshman,* 14 March 1834 recounts the views of a correspondent in Abergavenny responding to a story published in the *New Weekly Messenger* of a witch in London.
[20] E.I. Spence, *Summer Excursions Through parts of Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Herefordshire, Derbyshire, and South Wales,* Vol.11(London, 1809), p.64.
[21] *C.J.*, 14 June 1861. The *Cambrian* newspaper records a case heard at the Monmouth Assizes in the Spring of 1827, where a constable, farmer and two servants were found guilty of assaulting a very elderly woman named Mary Nicholas whom they suspected of being a witch. The incident which took place about one mile from Abergavenny was prompted by the illness of several of the farmer's cattle. Dragging the woman into a fold-yard, they made her perform certain rituals thought to ward off her powers. She was forced to kneel behind a colt, grasp some of the animal's tail and repeat a prayer, after which the men hit her with a bough of wild rose pulled out of the hedge in order to draw blood. They then stripped her from the waist upwards, looking for a mark where she had suckled imps. They cut off her hair and, on finding a wart, was about to duck her when, on her daughter's pleas, she was released; see *Cambrian,* 14 April 1827.
[22] Anderson, *Family Structure in Nineteenth century Lancashire*, p.88.
[23] Gillis, *For better, for worse*, p.125.
[24] Rosemary A.N.Jones' " 'Separate Spheres' : women, language and respectability in Victorian Wales", in Geraint H. Jenkins, (ed.), *The Welsh language and its social domains, 1801-1911* (Cardiff, 2000), p.213.
[25] E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London, 1991), p.461.
[26] *C.J.*, 1 June 1855.
[27] *C.J.*, 18 May 1849; see also *C.J.*, 3 January 1851 and 30 December 1864, for other incidents of mob anger directed at an extra-marital elopement and where women were prominent.
[28] Jones, "Women, community and collective action: the 'Ceffyl Pren' tradition", p.22.
[29] Ibid., p.18.
[30] *C.J.*, 3 January 1845.
[31] Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, p.268.
[32] See Matthew Cragoe, *An Anglican aristocracy: the moral economy of the landed estate in Carmarthenshire, 1832-1895* (Oxford, 1996), pp.93-103, for a discussion of the aristocracies' (the noun is used in to encompass landowners, local administrators and politicians in nineteenth-century Wales) obligations to their dependants within the orbit of paternalism. The landowner's wife would often be expected to help in this role.
[33] *Cambrian News,* 11 December 1869.
[34] *C.J.*, 6 October 1865.
[35] *C.J.*, 9 January 1857.
[36] *Cambrian,* 22 September 1827.
[37] P. Hollis, *Ladies Elect: women in English local government, 1865 - 1914* (Oxford, 1987), pp.205 - 209. The lowering of the property clause to £5 in 1893 before the Parish and Districts Councils Act of 1894 gave greater access for the election of women and working-class men.
[38] *Welshman,* 13 October 1837.
[39] *Welshman,* 9 June 1837. Two of the three overseers for the parish of Caio in 1867 were women, one a spinster, the other a widow, see Price, *History of Caio*, p.40. Notwithstanding the reluctance in recruiting females as Poor Law administrators in Wales, preliminary studies have indicated that, by the end of the nineteenth century, there were more female Guardians employed in the Principality than in any other region of the U.K., except for the north west of England; see King and Stewart, "The history of the Poor Law in Wales : under-researched, full of potential", pp.147-148.
[40] N.L.W., Llangibby MS. A 832: Llangyfelach and Llanguicke Association, 1784; for this and other examples, see Howell, *The Rural Poor*, p.233.
[41] Gareth Elwyn Jones, "Education, 1815-1974", in David W. Howell, (ed.), *Pembrokeshire County History*, vol. iv, *Modern Pembrokeshire* (Haverfordwest, 1993), p.400.
[42] Segalen, *Love and power in the peasant family*, p.150.
[43] *C.J.*, 18 July 1845.
[44] White, " 'Little Female Lambs': women in the Methodist Societies of Carmarthenshire, 1737-1750", p.32.

[45] My thanks for both the above quotations go to Anthony Jones of the Institute of the Arts, Chicago.
[46] Jenkins, *The agricultural community in south-west Wales*, p.231.
[47] White, "Early Methodist Societies in South-West Wales", p.61.
[48] Eryn M. White, "Women in the Early Methodist Societies in Wales", *Journal of Welsh Religious History*, 7 (1999), p.96.
[49] Llandovery Baptist Association, August 4 -6, 1846. This reference was kindly supplied by the Revd. Tudor Lloyd.
[50] *C.J.*, 1 January 1864.
[51] *C.J.*, 20 November 1863.
[52] *C.J.*, 5 May 1865. Although referring in flattering fashion to the invaluable help given by their "female friends" in charitable concerns, power and authority remained, however, firmly in male grasp; see *C.J.* 6 June 1848.
[53] *C.J.*, 3 January 1868.
[54] Jenkins, *The agricultural community in south west Wales at the turn of the twentieth century*, p.190.
[55] Kathy Peiss also makes this point in "Gender Relations and Working class Leisure; New York City, 1880 – 1920", in C. Groneman and M.B. Norton, (eds.), *"To Toil the Lifelong Day", America's Women at Work, 1780-1980* (New York, London, 1987), p.100.
[56] Malcolmson, *Popular recreation in English society,* pp.15-16.
[57] The great annual feast in Lancashire was the "Rush-bearing" feast accompanying the ceremony of bringing in rushes to cover the Church floor. Great importance was laid on home-based hospitality, the responsibility for which lay with the wife ; see John K. Walton and Robert Poole, "The Lancashire Wakes in the nineteenth century", in Robert D. Storch, (ed.), *Popular Culture and Custom in nineteenth- century England* (London, 1982)), p.100. At Larkrise, Flora Thompson maintains that houses would have been especially cleaned for the second of the two-day celebrations of the village's patronal day, for this time designated for women's tea parties, see Flora Thompson, *Larkrise*, pp. 230-231.
[58] Robert D Storch, (ed), *Popular Culture and Custom in nineteenth- century England,* pp.38-39.
[59] *Cambrian,* 11 May 1822, 26 July 1823, 11 September 1830.
[60] *Welshman,* 28 September 1838.
[61] C. Lloyd-Morgan, "Temperance to Suffrage", in Angela V. John, (ed.), *Our mothers' land: chapters in Welsh women's history, 1830-1939* (Cardiff, 1991), p.135.
[62] W.R. Lambert, *Drink and sobriety in Victorian Wales, c. 1820-1895* (Cardiff, 1981), pp. 94-95.
[63] *C.J.*, 13 December 1861.
[64] Lloyd-Morgan, "Temperance to Suffrage", pp. 135-158.
[65] *C.J,*. 29 March 1850.
[66] *C.J.*, 26 November 1858, 21 February 1862.
[67] *C.J.*, 16 December 1859.
[68] *C.J,*. 29 December 1854.
[69] *C.J.*, 18 August 1865, 6 October 1865. Some indication of the tone of the Llandeilo lecture and how it was received can be gleaned from the subsequent press review. Although criticising her delivery for being akin to a sermon and offering nothing new, she was approved for having spoken plainly with her "wholesome and homethrust" facts.
[70] *C.J.*, 2 January 1857.
[71] Revd. John Clifford in his paper "Religious Life in the Rural Districts of England", read to the Baptist Union Assembly in 1876 and quoted in D. Thompson, *Nonconformity in the nineteenth century* (London, 1972), p.211.
[72] *C. J.*, 17 May 1867, 22 November 1867; for a brief account of Cranogwen's career, see Lloyd-Morgan, "Temperance to Suffrage", p.138.
[73] J.L. Hammond and B. Hammond, *The Village Labourer* (London, 1911), p.116, cited in Jones, *Before Rebecca,* p.34..
[74] Refer, for example, to J. Bohstedt, "Gender, Household and Community Politics : Women in English Riots 1790 – 1810", *Past and Present,*118-121 (1988), pp.88-122, and E.P. Thomson's response, in "Moral Economy Reviewed", *Customs in Common*, pp.305-336.

[75] For a discussion on corn riots in Wales in the period 1793-1801, see Jones, *Before Rebecca,* pp.13-34.
[76] Thompson, *Customs in Common*, p.309.
[77] *C.J.*, 11 June 1847. In these famine years supplies of barley, along with seed potatoes, were imported to relieve the poor. Vessels containing thousands of bushels of grain sailed up navigable Welsh rivers to distribution centres to be consigned to merchants for dispersal. The Avona, for instance, arrived at Cardigan replete with 480 quarters of foreign barley, 200 quarters of which were bought by Tivyside gentlemen to be sold on to the poor; C.J., 23 April 1846, 2 July 1847.
[78] *C.J.*, 3 November 1854.
[79] David J.V.Jones, "The Corn Riots in Wales 1793 – 1801", *The Welsh History Review*, 2 (1964-1965), p. 344.
[80] N.L.W., H.O. 42/35: Correspondence of John Phillips of Williamston, Pembrokeshire, 18 August 1795.
[81] Hilary M. Thomas, *The diaries of John Bird 1790-1803*, (Cardiff, 1987), entry for 20 April 1801, p.131.
[82] N.L.W., H.O. 42/35: Correspondence of John Phillips of Williamston, Pembrokeshire, 18 August 1795.
[83] Jones, *Before Rebecca*, pp.27-29. Professor Jones talks of the considerable bad feeling directed towards those in authority; in particular, the main targets for attack were engrossers, that is corn-dealers, farmers, shop-keepers who were thought to profit by stockpiling grain.
[84] Thomas, *The diaries of John Bird, 1790-1803*, 20 April 1801, p.131.
[85] Natalie Z. Davis, "Women on top : symbolic sexual inversion and political disorder in early modern Europe", in B.A. Babcock, (ed.), *The Reversible World : Symbolic and Political Disorder in Art and Society* (London, 1978).
[86] E.P.Thomson maintains that women calculated they had "slightly greater immunity than the men from the retaliation of the authorities"; and in coming to this conclusion cites the Haverfordwest food riot. Thompson, *Customs in Common*, p.233. It appears widely accepted that females were allowed some leniency as far as being arrested for rioting was concerned, but a study of bread riots in the north-east of England suggests that examples were made of the worst offenders when passing sentence whether they were males or females. Malcolm I. Thomis and Jennifer Grimmett, *Women in Protest 1800-1850* (London, 1982), pp.41-42.
[87] Jones, "The corn riots in Wales 1793 – 1801", p.350.
[88] *Cambrian,* 21 April 1827.
[89] Derek Rees, *Rings and rosettes: the history of the Pembrokeshire Agricultural Society, 1784 – 1977* (Llandysul, 1977), pp.107-108.
[90] Thomis and Grimmett, *Women in Protest*, p.51.
[91] Ibid., p.52. In issues of land disputes Welsh females appeared to have greater involvement than their English counterparts.
[92] D.V.J. Jones, "Distress and Discontent in Cardiganshire, 1814-1819", *Ceredigion* 5, 3 (1966), p.284.
[93] Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, p.55.
[94] N.L.W. MS. 193D-224D: Notebook of Justice Samuel Heywood, Carmarthen circuit, 1807-1820, No. 6.
[95] *Cambrian* 1 July 1809; N.L.W., C.G.S. Gaol Files: 4/757/2.
[96] Thomis and Grimmett, *Women in Protest*, pp.52-55.
[97] *C.J.*, 14 July 1854, 11 August 1854.
[98] Thomas, *The diaries of John Bird, 1790-1803,* p.113-114..
[99] *Cambrian,* 22 Feburary 1806.
[100] *C.J.*, 11 August 18.
[101] *C.J.*,25 October 1861.
[102] *C.J.*,14 August 1846.
[103] *C J.*,18 June 1852.
[104] *C J.*, 24 January 1851.
[105] *Welshman,* 17 February 1832.

[106] Griffith Evan Jones, *Confessions of a Welsh Salmon Poacher* (London, 1877), p.25.
[107] *C.J.*,3 February 1865.
[108] *Times*, 24 July 1843.
[109] Thomis and Grimmett, *Women in Protest*, p 142.
[110] Thomis and Grimmett, *Women in Protest*, pp.60-61.
[111] H. Tobit Evans, *Rebecca and her Daughters* (Cardiff, 1910), pp. 83,199.
[112] *Swansea Journal*, 1 March 1843.
[113] *Swansea Journal*, 27 September 1843.
[114] Ryland Wallace, *Organize! Organize! Organize! : a study of reform agitation in Wales, 1840-1886* (Cardiff, 1991), p.159.
[115] This was certainly true of the two Members of Parliament for the county of Carmarthen who voted against Mr. Mill's motion for the enfranchisement of women, see *C. J.* 24 May 1867.
[116] *C.J.*, 27 May 1853.
[117] Julie Wheelwright, *Amazons and Military Maids: women who dressed as men in pursuit of Life, Liberty and Happiness* (Pandora, London, 1989), pp.8-9.
[118] Roland Quinault, "The French Invasion of Pembrokeshire in 1797: A Bicentenial Assessment", *The Welsh History Review*, 9, 4 (1999), p. 629; this incident has been linked to loyalist propaganda which stressed the threat of invasion to the sanctity of British women, see Linda Colley, *Britons: forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London, 1994), pp.256-7.
[119] Anon., *Transactions of Carmarthen Antiquarian Society*, Vol 1V (1908-1909), p.37.

6

Aspects of Marriage

Nid drygwr wrth ddrygwraig.

'Tis so, and pity be it should,

(A bad wife makes a husband good.) [1]

For the vast majority of women in Wales, their main chance of future prosperity lay firmly within the context of marriage. Marriage represented not only the legal tying of bonds of affection between themselves and their respective spouses, but also, importantly, their economic viability. The poverty-stricken existence that wives faced on the loss of a husband through death or desertion and their recourse to law when necessary bears tragic witness to this fact, as did breach of promise cases when parties sought recompense for hurt feelings and loss of prospects.[2] In the nineteenth century, at least, marriage was the only viable route for advancement, and was the normal path taken by most women. In the village of Bow Street, north Cardiganshire, according to the 1851 census, only 12 per cent of the population aged thirty and over were single.[3] Likewise, in a study of the parishes of Llangernyw and Gwytherin in Denbighshire, Roy Nash found, when using the 1871 census, that by middle-age (an age classification he puts at between 45-54) only 13 per cent of the population were not married, although by this time a similar percentage had become widowed.[4] Pressures for girls to marry were considerable and far more so than for men. If lack of career opportunities, education and poor wages were not incentive enough for women to seek their economic stability with a marriage partner, then societal mores exerted perhaps more subtle, but equally powerful forces channelling a girl's course towards matrimony. In a society where marriage was considered the natural state for a woman, those who preferred to remain single needed considerable resources of courage and conviction, for, besides the difficulties in earning a viable living, that is if not

relying on family charity, they risked being viewed with derision and scorn. It was an attitude which could continue to plague them even after death. The traveller Benjamin Heath Malkin, writing in 1807, critically observed that:

> The vulgar and illiberal prejudice against old maids and old bachelors subsists among the Welsh in a very disgraceful degree, so that their graves have not infrequently been planted by some satirical neighbours not only with rue, but with thistles, nettles, henbane and other noxious weeds. [5]

Nor did attitudes change particularly during the course of the century. David Jenkins maintains that at the turn of the twentieth century those spinsters "who earned their living undertaking the incidental tasks of the countryside" were "the butts of a good deal of ridicule" and, in addition, were more prone than other women, apart from widows, to be called by nicknames. [6]

Of those who chose to stay single, eschewing both husband and family in order to lead an independent existence, most, like their married sisters, remain invisible from view. Only the occasional, exceptional single woman rose out of obscurity to carve a niche in the record books, the most notable being Sarah Jane Rees (Cranogwen) whose credentials we have already described. Others, where they are mentioned, as in biographies and reminiscences, feature, tucked in, marginalised and anecdotally, amongst the scripts, as eccentric and odd characters of the countryside. D. J. Williams, writing in such a vein about Pegi the Lofft, a single woman who lived in Carmarthenshire until her death in 1897 at the age of 80, describes her, albeit affectionately, as "an old maid from birth" and one who had "some complication in her nature" which caused her to spurn indoor work and warmth, and, instead, to undertake jobs normally reserved for men. [7] Despite his confusion, he nevertheless gives us a vivid and valuable picture of a strong-minded independent spinster, someone very positive and definite in her ways who took her own path through life regardless of convention:

> In her petticoat and bedgown, the latter gathered up around her waist in a coil with the back of it coming down in a tapering tail, with homespun black stockings and brass buckles fastening her neat little pair of clogs, a spade, or mattock or billhook in her hand, around the fold, in the garden, or the haggard, or cutting a hedge – that is how you would see Pegi all day long, as busy as a bee and as skilful. . . .she smoked a clay pipe in people's presence without embarrassment. As far as I know, she never went to a meeting, and it was hard to know whether she belonged to the Church or was a Unitarian or an out and out pagan. [8]

Choosing a Partner - The Mechanics of Courtship

For the majority of young girls marriage was the expected eventuality, and a considerable amount of their time would have been spent speculating over choice of partner and prospective husband. Books on old customs and folklore devote pages to accounts of fortune-telling practices where the most popular questions asked were those relating to the subject of suitors. [9] It was widely believed amongst a superstitious populace that by practising certain procedures and uttering relevant incantations, spirits could be summoned, thereby making it possible for a young woman to see or foretell her future husband. Although for some their enactment was solely for light relief in a tedious and monotonous lifestyle, there can be no doubt that underneath there lay a belief, or a desire to believe, in their efficacy. A wide-ranging number of divinations were used, some involving simple procedures, others demanding complicated sequences of actions and incantations. Specific times in the calendar, such as saints' days, were regarded as being the most potent moments for invoking spirits, with the most important of all being All Hallow's Eve on 31 October. Variations of spells and rituals found favour in certain localities, while others, such as placing shoes at the foot of the bed, or

washing and drying a shirt before a fire and waiting to see who would appear at midnight to turn it, were used by females throughout south-west Wales. While a variety of household items would be used, some in conjunction with more unusual objects collected from hedgerows or fields, especially popular was the reading of tea leaves, an enduring custom which survived certainly up to very recent times.

For girls, chances of meeting members of the opposite sex outside the immediate confines of the farm or neighbourhood were limited. The best opportunities occurred at the periodic hiring fairs, renowned as traditional venues for many initial meetings of young people who came together, mixing and mingling amongst the crowd, to show off, enjoy the holiday atmosphere and flirt. Undoubtedly having anticipated the event for months, unattached girls, casting off their everyday wear to dress up in what finery they possessed, would walk together around the various stalls seeking to catch the eye of a fancied youth. A host of preliminary courtship rituals would, in turn, be engaged in by the youths, vying for the attentions of chosen girls, who, in many cases, would be approached by intermediaries, sent on behalf of prospective suitors, to ascertain whether their attentions would be favourably received.[10] Gifts of cakes, apples, drinks or even china ornaments were bought and given to receptive females by their admirers. The most popular girls received a number of these "fairings" during the course of the day and their favours were fought over by ardent suitors eager for the opportunity to accompany them home.[11] Fair night brought its own, more dubious, attractions if the non-conformist press is to be believed. The damning accounts relating scenes of sexual misbehaviour, with inhibitions loosened by drink, were probably not far from the truth, at least for some young people. Research undertaken in Bromley, Kent, suggests that there were links between the increase of illegitimate births in December to January and the county's previous Spring hiring fairs[12] The evidence received in his investigation into the condition of the Welsh agricultural labourer in the early 1890s led Daniel Lleufur Thomas to deduce that the hiring

fair, a time when many young people were changing their places of employment and thus, temporarily at least, outside an employer's or parental control, allowed farm workers to give free vent to their passions.[13]

Although the hiring fair did "allow for farm servants to meet and mix together without inhibition and helped to dissolve normal restraints and sanction what would on other occasions be less acceptable", and as such "played a vitally constructive role in the social pattern of rural nineteenth-century Wales", nevertheless other opportunities for the young to integrate did occur.[14] Occasions such as knitting nights, cwrw bach benefit nights, weddings, seasonal festivities and harvest-time also allowed young people to come together to flirt and engage in sexual banter.[15] The hay harvest, for instance, was a time of sexual encounters under the guise of mock games and tomfoolery. Sexual motives underpinned the actions of many young haymakers of both sexes who flirted and wrestled together in close bodily contact with the aim of throwing one another to the ground. These playful activities, called "the giving of the green gown" in Pembrokeshire and "awr ar y gwair" (an hour in the hay) in Carmarthenshire, often acted as a preamble to courtship.[16] For some, opportunities to court arose either during religious meetings themselves or afterwards when returning from chapel or church.[17] Such was the hold of non-conformity, with its attendant restrictions placed on "respectable" girls regarding their conduct, that by the end of the century there were few other opportunities to meet members of the opposite sex apart from chapel functions where intermediaries were again used to discover the feelings of potential sweethearts.[18] Writing in 1911, Ceredig Davies maintains that it had, by then, become almost a custom for a young man to accompany a young lady home from chapel or church.[19]

Other courtship rituals continued unabated. At the appropriate time, girls could look forward to the seasonal sending of valentine cards. Increasing in popularity during the nineteenth century, the earlier custom of sending hand-made tokens gradually gave way to

mass-produced cards enclosing messages ranging from love greetings to those of a more insulting, teasing nature, which were purchased and sent by mail. So popular had they become by mid-century in Llanelli that in February 1857 the town's booksellers, shops and the post office were besieged with young people wanting to buy and send valentines. [20]

After initial contact had, by mutual agreement, established links, a courtship of a more intimate character might well have taken place. Outwardly this closeness tended to be kept as quiet as possible, with very little displays of affection between a couple. Public outings together were restricted to a minimum until very near the wedding, the reasons forwarded for this including, first, "a kind of sensitive shyness" and, second and more practically, the lack of time to do otherwise given that work commitments filled all hours of daylight.[21] In private, however, and contrasting widely with the formally conducted courtship patterns of the middle and upper classes, which, with proprieties rigidly upheld, allowed no hint of intimacy of a sexual nature, a substantial, albeit diminishing, proportion of the young people living in the agricultural communities of south-west Wales continued throughout much of the nineteenth century to use the traditional and practical custom of staying up at night to court.

While the manner of courtship appeared to allow a certain degree of freedom in the choice of partner, young people, from propertied and farming backgrounds especially, were nevertheless bound by constraints of status, wealth and property.[22] Evidence from marriage registers led David Jones to conclude that marriage was one of the most class-orientated activities in rural Wales.[23] Daughters of farmers were expected to court farmers' sons, and vice versa, while female servants courted their male equivalent.[24] According to David Parry Jones:

> There was no intermarriage without losing caste and the consequent cutting off from the family circle. A farming family dragged down and disgraced by a "morganatic"

> marriage of this kind would not disburse the usual dowry, thus forcing the young couple to take up the position and status of farm labourers. [25]

However, in Pembrokeshire in the early nineteenth century, according to one source, differences in language and custom between the Welsh - and English - speaking parts of the county proved as powerful a determinant of choice of marriage partner as class:

> . . . to such an extent is the detestation of each other carried among the lower orders of the people, that matrimonial connections between the opposite parties is considered a misfortune to both families.[26]

It was paramount for parents to seek as good a match as possible for their children and, bearing this in mind, there was undoubted collaboration within a family to encourage eligible suitors to court a daughter at night. One respected farmer from the parish of Ystrad, in Cardiganshire, as much as admitted that this was so to a local magistrate when discussing a case where a girl's brother had accompanied her lover from the public house and had admitted him to her bedroom door. "Well you know, but the man was very rich; suppose I had several daughters, should I not wish to marry them well?", the man reasoned.[27] It could also be argued that the desire to keep money within a family led to the frequent occurrence of consanguineous marriages which, in turn, caused the high prevalence of congenital insanity in the Welsh countryside. [28]

Although a girl might well have some degree of choice in deciding whom she would court, it was within her interests, especially from a financial point of view, to seek parental approval. Where children stayed at home to work on the family farm, they received little remuneration on the understanding that they would be justly rewarded at a later date when

ready to acquire their own holding.[29] Whilst it was taken for granted that as generous a settlement as possible would be given to the children, both sons and daughters, in lieu of the their unpaid labour, it was still up to the parents to decide how much to contribute, if at all.[30] As in Ireland and rural Lancashire, there was a "strong emotional and functional commitment to family relationships" especially with concern to inheritance of land or portions, and "the parents had very considerable control over the actions of their children".[31] In Wales, girls' mothers were left with the responsibility for supervising the progress of courtships. [32]

Approval of a future spouse, however, did not rest solely upon a bride's parents but also upon other family members, each of whom, given the nature of family farming, had a stake in the farm's continuing prosperity. Agreement was vital for future relations as disapproval could, and often did, lead to flare-ups of temper and fighting. Disliking their sister's lover, in 1858 the three Parcel brothers set out to intimidate him by shaking him and pulling his hair whilst they threw water over their sister, and this occurred in spite of the fact that approval for the match had been given by the their widowed mother. Their later justification for their actions on the grounds that the man had exceeded the bounds of propriety with their sister proved to be false.[33] While brothers were wont to display a proprietorial attitude towards their sisters, youths in the rural community acted similarly towards the local females. The attitudes displayed towards strangers who wooed local girls in Montgomeryshire, so described by A. Bailey Williams, would have equally obtained in south-west Wales. While this characteristic was absent in the small country towns populated with a mixture of town-dwellers, both incomers and strangers, in the truly rural, more static, communities, strange suitors, especially those from rival villages, could be expected to receive some rough treatment, including being thrown in the mud, pelted with clods or even, in extreme cases, tarred and feathered.[34] Girls, in their turn, were judged not just by their family's position within the community and the extent

of their holding, but, as is discussed in the later chapter on sexuality, on considerations regarding their appropriateness as a suitable wife.

Even where there were no parental bonds or property considerations to dictate terms as to suitability of partnerships, informal societal rules went far to determine the boundaries of women's marital ambitions. Attitudes towards older women marrying younger men, for example, were as derisory as those displayed towards spinsters. News of such an event was even, in some cases, thought worthy of mention in the local newspapers whose accounts were often sadly tinged with biting mockery. According to the *Carmarthen Journal*, "None need despair" was the resounding echo of a wedding party surrounding an "ancient dame" of the village of Houghton near Pembroke, "who had plodded the weary round of single blessedness for three score years", and who was about to marry a young suitor.[35] In like vein, the marriage of Elizabeth Jones, a widow reported as having "upwards of 65 hard winters", to a young farmer's son of 22, was described as being "eccentric".[36] When the circumstances were reversed, the bridegroom would have been congratulated and envied for his good fortune.

For both propertied classes and farming families, before marriage arrangements were finalised there was the question of dowry. When a couple decided to wed, the father of the young man would, with a friend, visit the woman's father to discuss marriage portions and reach a settlement which would be agreeable to both parties.[37] The amounts given as a dowry depended very much on the financial circumstances of the family. D.J.Williams, in his autobiographical *The Old Farmhouse*, writes that his grandfather, who died in 1886, had dowered each of his daughters to the value of £200, which was presumably a very substantial sum of money with which to start their married life. [38] According to David Parry Jones: "The status and position of the farmer in the community, and consequently the price of his daughters in the matrimonial market, depended upon the number of dairy cows and teams the farm possessed."[39] So mindful were they to provide for their female offspring that some fathers, in

the event of their untimely death, carefully made provision for their daughters' marriage portions in their wills.[40] (It was not unknown for engagements to be broken by erstwhile ardent suitors, disappointed at designated dowries. It was a situation which could then lead to a breach of promise suit by his would-be bride.) [41]

When a couple decided to marry, the girl, if in service, would normally leave at the end of her term and go back to her parents, if that were possible, to make arrangements for the wedding and prepare whatever was necessary to keep the new household. A major proportion of a female servant's wages was saved for her wedding and to prepare a home together with her future partner. By the time Hannah Thomas wed, she had saved £30 out of her wages, a considerable sum of money, by putting £7 a year aside.[42] The ultimate goal for most young farm servants was to own or rent their own farms or smallholdings. By combining their savings and with the help of their friends, many were able to do so. [43]

While the groom was responsible for livestock and implements, that is, when a couple were fortunate to *start* married life with their own land, it generally fell to the girl to provide the household linen, bedding and furniture.[44] Ruth Jones' mother, in the interim period between leaving her service and getting married, wove and stitched her own clothes and blankets in readiness to set up home. Taking loving care to ensure the highest standard possible, Ruth's mother painstakingly stitched her garments with an evenness which was greatly admired.[45] In a society which thrived on competitiveness, and within which community approval was an abiding consideration, it was important for a bride's future standing, in addition to her own personal pride in her family, to bring the best dowry she could to the marital home. "You are not up to much; when you married, your feather bed only weighed 40lb., and was made of fowl's feathers, but mine weighed 60 lbs. and was made of goose down", was the cutting remark overheard being made by one woman to another in a heated argument.[46] D.J.Williams states that nothing wounded his mother so much as the hurtful

remarks made by her brother-in-law when he taunted her that "she had come into Penrhiw [her husband's home] a naked woman with a dowry of only so much and nothing else". [47]

Besides a dowry, couples would add to their stock when setting up home by holding a bidding, whereby they would call in all the reciprocal debts owed to them and their respective families for similar contributions made earlier. Even when bidding died out, the custom of donating gifts of money and pieces of furniture to young married couples to "set up a house" continued. [48] In the parish of Redberth, Pembrokeshire, in the late 1840s, it was customary for bridesmaids to circulate amongst the guests with plates in order to received the bidding contributions which would then be emptied into the white apron of the bride standing there to receive them. [49] The less well-off couples would make money to "begin the world with", by brewing beer to sell on the wedding night, as did one girl at Solva who was caught red-handed illicitly brewing her own smuggled malt for her wedding day. [50] In the Pembrokeshire village of Begelly, the bride and her friends would make cakes to sell in what would have been called a "Spree wedding". [51]

Who did girls marry and at what age did they lose their single status ? For those entering marriage for a first time it is highly probable that not only would a husband be chosen from a similar background as themselves but that he would come from their own, or a neighbouring, parish. An examination of the registers for the Carmarthenshire parishes of Pembrey and Abergwili for the twenty-five years between 1813 and 1837 indicates that, of the 390 and 391 marriages which took place, just over 81 per cent and 66 per cent respectively listed both bride and groom as residing within the same parish, and that, in those cases where they did not, one of the partners was drawn predominantly from nearby parishes.[52] Information on the ages of brides and their husbands contained within the parish register of Machynlleth in Montgomeryshire for the years 1782-1800 gives a mean age on marriage for single persons as 25.95 for men and 24.73 for women.[53] This compares with the figures of 26.4 for men and

24.9 for women for the same period, as calculated by Wrigley and Schofield for certain English parishes.[54] However, as Bridget Hill remarks, "Concentration on the mean age of marriage is apt to conceal very great variations in marriage age both within a community and between different communities at the same moment in time."[55] Data extracted from the 1871 census on the two Denbighshire parishes of Llangernyw and Gwytherin give a mean age difference between couples as three years, but what is surprising is that similar evidence for Bow Street, Cardiganshire, in 1851, indicates that in a considerable number of cases the brides were a few years older than the husband.[56] Not all unions were recorded on parish registers, however.

It is as impossible to assess the number of common law marriages which occurred in nineteenth-century Wales as it is to compare their proportion to legal unions. Although dying out in south Wales due, it was said, to the influence of religion, which had " taught [men] the criminality of having a community of wives, as well as been (*sic*) convinced of its unreasonableness and impolicy ", according to the Revd. John Evans the more remote parts of north Cardiganshire saw clandestine marriages continue up to the early years of the nineteenth century.[57] Despite the passing of Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753 which sought to regularise marriage, a couple could have a form of trial marriage, and if deciding to remain together, could then declare so in front of friends in the "little wedding", after which they would be considered married in the eyes of the community. It was thus acceptable for a girl to cohabit with her partner, and her reputation and future marriage prospects were said to remain intact even in the event of a separation. [58] That such cohabitation occurred in the more remote areas has been explained on the grounds of the sparcity of resident landlords or educated clergy to exercise control. [59]

Given the considerable pressure to marry, the big public wedding with its attendant rituals held a key position throughout the nineteenth century.[60] Many of the more flamboyant and dangerous wedding customs avidly described by folklorists, however, were by mid-century

dying out, again only to survive longest in the more remote districts of the west. A horseback wedding which took place in remote Cardiganshire in the 1820s, was thus described in the *Cambrian* newspaper as being a "singular custom" and far removed from the experiences of couples elsewhere.[61] Aside from the well-documented evidence surrounding the big wedding, only the odd tantalising pieces of evidence provide glimpses of how marriages were celebrated. Seven or eight couples were said to have married in Carmarthen in the morning of the town's hiring fair in November 1867, their "show" of parading around the town arm-in-arm wearing greenish-coloured gloves setting them apart from the crowds. [62] Another account describes a domestic servant and her new spouse celebrating their wedding day by parading around the town accompanied by a number of attendants, all wearing their best clothes with white waistcoats, before attending their own wedding party and bidding ceremony.[63] It is difficult to determine whether they attended church, chapel or a civil ceremony. The relaxation of the laws regarding civil marriage in 1836 saw an increasing numbers of couples preferring this method to wed. Becoming more popular from mid-century onwards, by 1880 the incidence of civil weddings in most parts of rural south-west Wales was over twice, or three times, the national average for England and Wales, with Haverfordwest recording 33 per cent of marriages performed in a secular ceremony, and Pembroke, 25 per cent. In the district around Newcastle Emlyn in Carmarthenshire, the percentage was even higher, reaching over four times the national rate. [64] Reasons for this higher occurrence can be only surmised. While the least expense would undoubtedly have been a consideration, especially in comparison to the big wedding, it is to be wondered how far civil ceremonies came to replace common law unions.

The times in the year that girls married depended very much on the needs of agriculture and not least on the times when agricultural holdings came up for rent. At the turn of the twentieth century, in mid- Wales, changing tenancies in May resulted in twice the number of weddings compared to other months. In Troedyraur, Cardiganshire, marriages were held either

in February, before the spring sowing, or in September and October, both slack months for agriculture and when tenancies were changed.[65] Setting up a separate household proved difficult for many couples, especially with the dearth of suitable holdings available. From the closing decades of the eighteenth and throughout most of the nineteenth century, land hunger in south-west Wales necessitated that some married couples live with their in-laws on the family farm until such time that they could rent or buy a suitable holding for themselves.[66] Ruth Jones' mother started her married life living in a barn near Synod, Cardiganshire, staying there until a small holding, with enough land to accommodate three or four cattle, a horse and some sheep, became available.[67] As occurred in Llangain, north Wales, married life for some young wives was restricted to merely having their husbands pay them visits, with each staying in their separate homes, or, in the case of the husband, remaining in service until a holding or cottage became free.[68] For most brides, however, marriage heralded a new start with a fresh household.

Marital Relations

It is difficult to determine the extent of marital harmony and companionship that existed between marriage partners in nineteenth-century south-west Wales. From a strictly economic and legal standpoint women had no choice but to take an inferior position in the marriage. Dependant on her husband, any rights a woman might have had when single were stopped on marriage to be merged with her husband's. In the eyes of the law, women were classified, along with children, as minors. "[The law] .. places the wife under the guardianship of the husband and entitles him, for the sake of both, to protect her from the danger of unrestrained intercourse with the world, by enforcing cohabitation and a common residence". [69]

For some women it appears, at least according to the testimony of one wife who lived near Tregaron in Cardiganshire, that a successful marriage depended very much on the attitude

of a husband towards his family and his willingness to provide them with the necessities of life. Despite the poverty she and her family experienced, surviving as they did on the meagre earnings gained from peat cutting and augmented by knitting, she was "as happy as any of the great folk, for that he [her husband] loved her and his children, and worked very hard, and they wanted for nothing he could get for them".[70] This intimation of seeming passivity on the part of the wife, stands in stark contrast to views on the complementary and essential role women played within the family on family holdings, which, it has been argued, equipped wives with a considerable amount of power within their own household, so that "while men assume primacy in public roles, it is women who prevail in the domestic sphere".[71] It has alternatively been argued that while patriarchal authority was dominant within society, women could find themselves not so much empowered within the household, as overpowered. Not only could the family home be an "earthly paradise", a haven of peacefulness for its inmates, but it could be the opposite, a "hell on earth"; not only a "walled garden, but a stifling menagerie of evil forces unchecked by interference from any higher authority".[72] A recent study has suggested that a control element in marital relations, emanating from the desire of the husband to be "master in his own house", could actually throw the enduring ideology of "separate spheres" into question.[73] Perhaps this latter view can be best summed up by the sentiments voiced in a Dundee agricultural society meeting, and reported in a September 1805 issue of the *Cambrian* newspaper, that " the best animal that could be brought upon a farm was a good wife".[74]

It has been argued that from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, there was a shift in attitude towards more companionate, loving relationships within the marital home which, in turn, prompted a growing hostility towards, and a turning away from, at least violence and physical abuse.[75] Wives in particular were increasingly seen by Evangelical reformers as being important moralising forces, influencing both children and husband to adopt higher standards

of behaviour. An article entitled "Y Dylanwad Benywaidd" in *Y Dysgedydd*, in 1850, for instance, wrote:

> ...O wraig, os buest yn foddlon drwy hud y sarff I yru dyn I grwydro oddiwrth ei Greawdwr, cais etto fod ym offerynol dan fendith yr Ysbryd Glan I dynnu y byd yn ol at ei waredwr, oblegid, il tydi yw mam y byd, calon dy wr, a brennhines dy deulu. [76]
>
> (O wife, if you were faithful through the magic of the serpent to drive a man to wander from her Creator, try again to be instrumental under the blessing of the Holy Ghost to bring the earth back to its saviour, because you are the mother of the world, the heart of your husband, and the queen of your family.)

Other prescriptive literature contained in Welsh women's periodicals pertaining to the middle-class "Angel in the house" ideal for wives, included offers such as advice to their readers on how to behave when a husband came home feeling miserable, in short advocating thus that they should "keep a smile on their lips continually".[77] How far this advice was accepted and adhered to, however, is questionable. Certainly autobiographers, reminiscing about their lives in the nineteenth century, speak of their happy childhood in the bosom of their devoted and steadfast families where their mothers exhibited all the qualities that had come to be expected in a perfect wife, that is "depth and intensity of character....merry and witty in company, yet when necessary, make (ing) a quiet remark.... selfless and without any desire to be seen". [78]

Contemporaneously to the promotion by high-minded moralists of these womanly and wifely ideals, it appears that numbers of wives and mothers were still being systematically subjected to a barrage of verbal and physical abuse from their partners within the inner recesses of their own homes. Newspaper accounts of trials involving wife-beating which came before

the south-west Wales courts give ample testimony of the level of abuse which still existed within marital life. Still prevalent were the traditional beliefs which placed the husband firmly as the head of his household, with wife, children and servants assigned lesser, subordinate positions in which they could be disciplined when necessary. Such beliefs were reinforced by higher authorities. Sir Francis Buller (Judge Buller) was reputedly said to have declared in 1782 that legally a husband could beat his wife with impunity provided he used a stick no thicker than his thumb.[79] In Wales, custom was said to uphold "three blows with a broomstick to any part of the person except for the head" as a marital discipline to be enforced as, and when, necessary.[80]

Judging by accounts of court cases reported by the local press, the extent of violence inflicted on some wives far exceeded a mere few blows to the body. The wife of John Lewis, a copperman at Llanelli, would certainly have testified that this was the case, if she had been able; so severely was she abused by her husband that not only was her body covered in bruises so that her flesh resembled "red gooseberries", but the brutal conduct, witnesses believed, had so affected her mind by weakening her intellect that she had come to be considered mentally unsound. The husband, meanwhile, admitted to only "strapping" his wife in order to bring her into submission. [81]

The degree of abuse perpetrated on wives varied from slaps and injured pride to serious harm. What does seem apparent is that wife-beating was likely to be repeated, if not checked, with the violence inflicted increasing with every incident. In some cases, violent assaults led to death. Mary Thomas, an asthmatic living in Llanelli, died shortly after her drunken husband, a tucker, had beaten her. Coming home drunk from Swansea market in the early hours of a Sunday morning, he accused her of always being in a dream, whereupon he picked up the frying pan in which she was frying him some bacon and used it to thrash her unmercifully. When the timely intervention of neighbours allowed her to escape into the comparative safety

of a nearby house, she admitted having been nearly killed by her husband on an earlier occasion. Bruised and battered, the poor woman gradually became delirious, losing her power of speech and unable to catch her breath. She eventually died four days later of an asthma attack, presumably brought on by the assault. With the prosecution at the subsequent trial unable to prove that the violence had caused her death, the husband was acquitted.[82] (Not all wife murders were caused by persistent abuse. Recidivist wife-killer John Griffiths, who was hanged for poisoning his second wife at Haverfordwest in 1811 with arsenic administered in a lethal cocktail of gruel and treacle, subsequently confessed to killing his first wife two years earlier by similar methods, and gave as his reason for doing so that the devil had persuaded him.)[83]

To some extent, the domestic violence inflicted on wives reflected the rough and "hands on" treatment that was meted out by those so inclined. Shani D'Cruze highlights as one of her central tenets that, at least at this level, violence and the threat of violence was "an important strategy in maintaining or asserting differentials across power relations, particularly gender relations".[84] Newspapers give details of physical assaults delivered by both men and women in a variety of contexts both inside and outside the family circle. Within the home situation, it was not only wives (and husbands) who were victims, for relatives and servants were also in danger of physical assault. [85] Children in particular, because of their size and dependency, were especially vulnerable to abuse from a dictatorial parent or merely because they were present at the time of a matrimonial broil. Jane Lewis' husband got up one night in a vile temper after being awakened from an alcohol-induced sleep, and flung his infant daughter on the floor before grabbing his wife's throat with both hands and half choking her. [86] Such was the excessive brutality used against one girl of twelve by her father, who flogged her after hearing she had been accused of stealing fruit from a neighbour, that doubts were expressed as to her recovery from the injuries.[87] Stepchildren often provided fathers, and mothers, with

extra targets with which to vent their spleen. It was inevitable that living with an offspring from another relationship might bring additional pressure on already difficult marriages. John Davies beat his step-daughter with a belt and threatened to drown the child, and Sarah Evans deposed at Llanbadarn petty sessions near Aberystwyth, that her husband, as well as beating her, had regularly abused her four-year-old child from an earlier marriage. [88]

Tempers were easily aroused over insults and bad feeling, and assaults occurred with frequent regularity, many being prompted by drunkenness, where alcohol heightened aggressive feelings as well as gave courage to those who perhaps would not normally be so bold. Many of the domestic assaults inflicted were due either to the influence of alcohol or were alcohol-related, when husbands came home the worse for drink from public houses, markets or fairs where vast amounts of alcohol were habitually consumed.[89] That alcohol was an important part of the leisure activities of the working man can be seen from the profusion of public houses which abounded in south-west Wales in the 1840s. In the Towy valley, for instance, the Report of the Education Commissioners in 1847 mentions six on the road between Llandeilo and Langadog and 14 in the village of Langadog itself, while Landovery boasted 47. In 1822, the town of Carmarthen, alone, was the location for 82 drinking establishments. [90] Such public houses were often the venues of ugly scenes between men and their wives, especially when the latter tried to persuade their husbands to return home. Ann Davies, who was beaten up by her drunken and resentful husband on a Saturday night after she had persuaded him to go home with her from his drinking place, testified that normally the man was quiet when sober, but that "the beer does alter him shockingly", making him abusive and violent. [91]

Other reasons for husbands abusing their wives were varied and numerous. Most marital disagreements occurred, however, when one of the partners was perceived to have failed to fulfil his or her obligations towards the marriage. Just as wives had certain

expectations of their husbands, so, too, did men require their wives to fulfil obligations within their own sphere of operations. [92] It appears that while men were perceived by their wives as providers of the bulk of the household income, so was the woman's role seen in the efficient running of the household, providing meals, childminding, balancing the budget and fulfilling conjugal rights. Any perceived failure in fulfilling each, or all, of these roles was liable to result in domestic disharmony, which, when escalating from verbal into physical violence, was likely to place the wife firmly at a disadvantage, a poor match not only against her husband's superior strength but also his authority as master of the house. Doubly disadvantaged, she was even more likely to become the unhappy recipient of her husband's brute force. Hence Elizabeth Evans' grievance against her husband that he had only worked for three days in a matter of months, and that the 2s. She had received from him was spent having his shoes tapped, resulted in an altercation which saw her being forcibly locked inside her own house and beaten. [93]

Cases of husbands resorting to violent behaviour over what they saw as their wives' failure in meet their expectations were many and various. When Eliza Lewis' husband came home drunk and demanding his dinner, he flew into a rage when it was not forthcoming and although the woman explained that she had no money to buy any food, he grabbed her by her hair, a not uncommon occurrence. [94] Even confiding in other women was enough provocation to warrant a beating, as Eliza Powell found, when her husband attacked her for telling some of the neighbours of his behaviour towards her after his return from militia training. [95] As a wife was perceived as a man's own personal property to do with as he liked, sometimes no reason for abuse was needed. Thomas Morgan Lewis, a yeoman, picked on everything he could about his wife. This brute complained about her cooking, her clothes, his lack of clothes and her looks, calling her a "nasty, ill-natured slut, whose looks were enough to make any man hate her"; in saying this his anger was so roused that he took a knife and slashed her with it across

the cheek and throat. [96] One of the most dangerous situations for a wife, however, was to be the victim of sexual jealousy, a powerful emotion capable of bringing out murderous tendencies. Daniel Jones brutally beat his wife and burned her when, in a drunken rage, he suspected her of having committed adultery. [97]

Some protection against domestic violence was provided at law and increasingly legislated against during the course of the nineteenth century. While magistrates had the power to order offenders to keep the peace, in 1828 they were given the right to punish summarily those convicted of common assaults with fines up to £5 and prison sentences for defaulters. As a result of growing concern regarding physical abuse towards women and children in the 1850s, an Act for the Prevention and Punishment of Aggravated assaults on Women and Children was passed in June 1853 which allowed fines to be imposed of up to £20 or a custodial sentence of up to six months. For speediness of hearing, cases could be tried outside the normal petty sessions and a third party was permitted to bring the complaint. [98]

Communities had long used their own methods for curbing the worse excesses of men known to beat their wives by employing shaming rituals designed to embarrass the perpetrator so that he might desist. Such communal practices persisted well into the nineteenth century within south-west Wales. David Parry-Jones tells us that neighbours would enlist the services of the local bard to satirize, and hence ridicule, any perceived injustice within the community. It was said that the words had more effect on the wife-beater than any threats to call the police.[99] The more dramatic and public form of shaming ritual employed, ceffyl pren, was used in cases of persistent abuse and, as already discussed, was often instigated and led by women protesters. Although traditionally used to enforce patriarchal values against disorderly wives, the practice had, by the nineteenth century, metamorphosed into, amongst others, a method of castigating wife-abusers.[100] Hence John Morris, suspected of beating his wife, was seized by

his neighbours during an auction in autumn 1834 in the parish of Llanbadarn, Cardiganshire, with the intention of forcing him onto the ceffyl pren as a punishment and deterrent. [101]

Instances of ceffyl pren, however, were rare when compared with the actual level of abuse perpetrated on wives. That this was so is not difficult to explain. There was a great reluctance to interfere in what was essentially seen as a private matter between husband and wife and there was even less incentive to intervene when it was commonly known that the two parties lived on bad terms. When Daniel Jones' children ran, at their mother's behest, to beg neighbours to prevent their drunken father from beating her, they refused to get involved, excusing themselves by saying that they knew the way the Jones' household was conducted and the frequent quarrels that took place there.[102] Likewise, there was a reluctance to involve police in domestic disputes. Brawls were covered up and excused, so as not to involve the authorities. P.C. David Williams of the Carmarthen Borough Constabulary reported in his official diary that on hearing screams coming from Nott Square one night at a quarter to ten, he proceeded there but was stopped from entering the house of Morgan the shoemaker, the location of the noise, by a female telling him it was alright. Another voice cried out, however, that it was far from being alright and that Morgan was beating his wife.[103] Police were equally as reluctant to involve themselves in marital disputes. Not only were they often unsure as to the procedure to be adopted but were likely to be attacked themselves, even by the injured wife or her family. David Walters, who responded to a cry of "murder" from a battered wife at Llanelly, ran to her aid whereupon he was, in turn, attacked by the woman herself, her daughter and a stepson.[104]

Any attempt to quantify the incidence of wife-beating in south-west Wales is, as elsewhere, a difficult task. Contemporaries, however, were well aware of the extent of domestic abuse. In a lecture on crime delivered by Henry Austin Bruce in 1875, comments were made that it was well known that only a small proportion of wife-beating offences were

actually prosecuted.[105] In part this was accounted for by the reluctance of victims to prosecute their husbands. Just as Evan Williams' wife spoke of the seven years' persecution she had endured from her drunken husband, yet she was loth to testify against him in a court of law.[106] Equally, when miner, John Jones, was suspected of beating his wife, and dragged out of bed by a mob of people and in true ceffyl pren tradition put on a ladder and carried about the neighbourhood for several hours, his wife denied that he had done any wrong.[107]

Even far less frequently reported were incidents of women browbeating their husbands by resorting to violence themselves. Cases of this nature were not, however, unknown. The neighbours of John Mathias of Felin-foel near Llanelli firmly believed, when they found him hanged, that he had preferred to die rather than be subjected to further haranguing and ill-treatment from his wife, who they described as a "perfect virago".[108] Perhaps similar incidents failed to come to light because of the reluctance to acknowledge any weakness in a husband's dominant position within his family. The fishing women of the close-knit community of Llangwm were said to impose "petticoat rule" over their husbands, but this could be attributed equally to their formidable reputation or to the retention of the wife's maiden name on marriage.[109]

It has been demonstrated above that much of the responsibility for concealing the extent of wife-beating rests with the actual victim. Wives were reticent about talking of difficulties in their domestic circumstances. Like Betti, in Caradoc Evans' apocryphal tale, "The Woman Who Sowed Iniquity", who hid her bruised body from relations and eventually ceased to leave her house for fear that her injuries would be noticed, some women were reluctant to own up to being beaten, seeing this as an admission of a failed marriage.[110] Marriage was viewed as a private matter and any discord or strife within the marital home was to be kept closely within its boundaries. Respectable women were discouraged not only from discussing their marital

relationships with outsiders, be it friends or neighbours, but from voicing criticisms of husbands' shortcomings or actions. [111]

To a large extent, anyway, wives accepted their husbands' behaviour as an unpleasant but, nevertheless, accepted part of marriage. Richard Jefferies when writing about a man imprisoned for incendiarism, told of how he marked his release and return home by administering a thrashing to his wife who "received it with equanimity, remarking that it was only his way".[112] While David Jones has observed that women in the towns of Cardiff, Newport and Swansea were more open about reporting their husbands to the authorities than might perhaps be thought, in the event embarrassing police officials by seeking help and summonses and parading their own as well as their children's bruises, this was not necessarily the case in the more rural areas.[113] Anna Clark, writing about late eighteenth-century plebeian London women, states that their experience in public life, that is, working and socializing in London streets, "apparently gave them greater confidence to appear in court than their rural sisters enjoyed".[114] More important, perhaps, in explaining women's acceptance of their husbands' violence was that they were afraid to complain against their husbands for fear of reprisals. Even when they did complain, they often did not appear to testify in court, as imprisoning a husband meant the loss of his economic support.[115] Anne Davies testified at Carmarthen petty sessions that she had already made two complaints against her husband previous to this particular instance, but had stopped short of proceeding against him, despite the fact that she had often been compelled to escape through a window in the house to avoid being attacked.[116] Charles Davies, a tailor, had his case dismissed at the Town Hall because his wife "thought it imprudent to appear against her better half".[117] Even when Thomas Lloyd appeared before the Assizes to answer the charges of maliciously cutting and wounding his wife with a hatchet with intent to murder her and despite his admission of guilt, his wife denied knowing who had given her the blow. She begged for her husband to be released by partly blaming

herself for what had happened and pleading that she had a large family for whom he was the only support. [118]

When cases were heard in front of the bench, magistrates, after reprimanding the husband, would make every effort they could to reconcile the couple to live peaceably with each other. When husbands were convicted, only small fines and sentences were meted out.[119] Mary Davies was advised to settle her differences when she left her husband after he had threatened to kill her and when she objected, was considered obstinate.[120] Attitudes were ambivalent, for women were expected to behave according to the standards set down by the patriarchal society within which they lived and if they departed from this, a degree of physical correction imposed on them by their husbands was still deemed permissible.[121] Mr. Baron Parke, when addressing the Grand Jury in a case where a man was accused of attempting to strangle his wife, directed them to throw out the bill if they thought the man had been merely threatening her into a confession of adultery.[122] Prevailing attitudes leaned heavily in favour of men. Even drunkenness and frequent visits to a public house were permissible as a husband's refuge and escape from a dirty home, slovenly wife and squalling children.[123] On the other hand, considerable sympathy was expressed towards a husband if he sought to explain to the bench that he abused his wife on account of her own drunken habits. Ruth Evans' husband was advised by magistrates officiating in the assault case she had brought, to make her an allowance and get rid of her after witnesses testified to her habitual drunkeness.[124]

Unless one or the other partner absconded, most unhappy couples were trapped in loveless marriages for life, although those with supportive families were able to return to their former homes, at least temporarily. Mary Evans, for instance, returned twice within a year of her marriage after accusing her husband of violent and threatening behaviour.[125] On marriage, the husband gained possession of all property belonging to the couple, and while he could dispose of it as he wanted, if his wife did likewise, against his wishes, it was considered a

crime. When Stephen Davies' wife ran away from their home at Pater because of "grievous wrongs" perpetrated on her by her husband, taking all "his" goods away with her, he preferred a charge of felony against her. The advice given him, however, was to reclaim his goods back as soon as possible with a policeman in attendance and return to his home.[126]

For the majority of women, especially when they had children to consider, there was little choice other than to stay and endure married life for, as abandoned wives quickly discovered, single status and a family to support stood for a life of poverty and near destitution. Although held equally liable for any children born in a marriage, in practical terms it was far easier for a man, unburdened by the day-to-day responsibility of child care, to abscond from a marriage than a wife.

For some husbands, discontentment, marital disharmony, a taste for freedom or simply the responsibility of having to provide for their families proved too much and, unable or perhaps unwilling to cope with the added pressure of threatening poverty in an uncertain labour market, fled, abandoning their wives and children to their fate. When faced with this dilemma, a wife could either pledge her husband's credit with a willing tradesman to obtain goods, a facility not readily available to the poorer sections of society, or, what was far more likely, apply to the parish for relief.[127] Even if a wife found the means to subsist independently, it was not until 1857 that she could apply through legal means, via a magistrates' court, to protect her earnings from her errant husband who could return and claim them as his own.[128]

Meagre as the parish allowance was, it nevertheless provided a buffer against starvation for the deserted wife and any children resulting from the marriage. David Jones' wife, who found herself and their five children destitute when her husband, finding his wages as a currier reduced by three shillings a week, absconded, deserting her, was only one of a number of women in the town of Carmarthen who had been left unsupported by their husbands and forced onto the parish, in the years 1833 to 1835, according to the evidence of churchwarden Edmund

Hills Stacey, Esq.[129] Stone masons, sawyers and shoemakers were among the landless labourers and artisans who normally made up the numbers of errant husbands tracked down by Overseers of the Poor and forced to return home in order to renew their familial obligations or, if not, face gaol sentences ranging from weeks to months. Many were apprehended in the rapidly industrializing areas of south-east Wales, which, with its shifting population and labour needs, appeared a convenient destination for those seeking both anonymity and employment.[130] Thus while husbands had the capacity for earning higher wages, their wives and families, meanwhile, had the humiliating experience of having to subsist on public charity, or worse still, enter a workhouse. One man who deserted his wife in Carmarthen was located working in Llantrisant, where a new pit had started, for the daily rate of 3s. a day. His wife, meanwhile, was forced to subsist on a mere 1s. 6d. a week from the parish fund. [131]

While most deserting husbands submitted excuses for their disappearance, which usually hinged on their wives' violent temper or jealousy, some, like Thomas Burnhill, expressed the hope that their wives would eventually join them in their new location. He explained when caught, that he had sent money and letters to his wife in the hope that she would move up to Merthyr to be with him, as he could not afford to support his family on his income of 18d. a day if they lived separately.[132] Others, however, were prompted to start their lives afresh, and concocted elaborate stories to enable them to do so. Twenty-four- year-old John James' wife, who was deserted when he left the marital home in Llanybydder, Carmarthenshire, for a new life in Neath, eventually heard from an acquaintance of his that her husband had met with an untimely death on a Cardiff railway track, when, in actuality, he was still alive and had married again. [133]

Although cases of bigamy could be instigated by either of the aggrieved wives or even both, the difficulty in finding the necessary funds to finance an action resulted in many men getting away scot free.[134] Considered a penal offence in the 1790s, and punishable with

transportation for seven years, the evidence in south-west Wales reveals that most men found guilty of the charge of bigamy received custodial sentences ranging from months to several years. The crime was seen as not only a violation of the marriage laws and duty to the lawful wife, but also a grievous harm to the second, especially if the latter was young or a woman of good character. In his summing up of a bigamy case whereby John Meyler, a mason, was charged at Pembroke Spring Assizes of bigamy, the judge commented on the two-fold nature of the crime. Not only did the defendant violate the law and disregard the sacred contract of marriage and duty towards his wife, but he also offended against his second wife, an innocent 33-year-old daughter of a smith, who had become, as a result of his actions, a mother without a husband or support.[135] Alternatively, when a woman committed bigamy, it was not considered such a crime, as, not only would a second husband retain his moral reputation, but no illegitimate issue would arise. Instances of females committing bigamy, however, were much less frequent, although Mary Collis caused a stir in the town of Carmarthen by intermarrying with a local policeman while her first husband, a fisherman, was still alive. Found guilty, her sentence reflected the lesser crime, in that she received six months' imprisonment.[136]

As would be expected, cases when they did come to court excited great interest amongst spectators. Proceedings involving matrimonial broils were conducted amidst outcries of merriment and exaggerated outrage. Laughter erupted in court when the bigamist John Meyler, by way of mitigation, explained that this was his first offence.[137] On the other hand, it was reported in the press that on the occasion of a court case of bigamy involving a cabinet-maker from Prendergast in Pembrokeshire, when the court was crowded with onlookers, the man's partner, Ann Pride, commonly thought of as being equally duplicitous in the affair, had to have a police escort out of the court building to safeguard her passage through the crowds on the street, the odd cheer accompanied by hoots of disapproval.[138] As in other sexual trangressions, females were only too likely to be held up for censure.

For women there existed very few options to escape unhappy marriages or abusive partners. Besides the threat of financial hardship, legal divorce, at least before 1857, was difficult to obtain and costly to instigate. Separation through legal channels was available within the ecclesiastical judicial procedure and did not constitute divorce, or by parliamentary bill, an action which, due to its enormous expense, was practicable only for the extremely wealthy and well-connected.[139] One resort adopted by the poorer sections of society was wife-selling, a device, as explained by E.P.Thompson, "to enable a public divorce and re-marriage by the exchange of a wife". Taking the form of a "high-profile public rite of exchange" whereby the wife was usually led around a public place, such as a market, in a halter to be bought by another man, the humiliating ritual gained popularity with the lower orders from the eighteenth century down to the 1850s.[140] Few, if any, instances are recorded of this having occurred in rural south-west Wales, however, although it would be wrong to assume that the practice of wife-selling, with its attendant ritual, was unknown here.[141] An event akin to a wife-sale occurred in south Pembrokeshire in the 1760s, where a collier's wife was "bought" by a gentleman in an agreement with her husband, who settled, in return, for a crown, a gallon of beer and a calf-skin waistcoat.[142] Furthermore, in a bigamy case heard at the Glamorgan Assizes in Spring 1843, where Anne Richards was accused of having married another man after believing herself to have been sold to him in the town of Merthyr for 3d. by her husband, the presiding judge, in his summing up, spoke of the "absurd notion" of "certain classes" who believed such practices freed a couple from their wedding vows.[143]

The passing of the Matrimonial Causes Act in 1857 made divorce more accessible to a larger proportion of the population, although it did discriminate unequally between men and women in that the latter had to prove a husband's adultery, in addition to desertion or cruelty as grounds for instigating proceedings. Jane Davies, the first wife in the Principality to use the judicial procedure in this way, was able to legally rid herself from a miserable marriage, after

having endured her husband's unfaithfulness and his cruel and violent behaviour, by instigating divorce proceedings at the 1859 Cardiganshire Spring Assizes.[144] Jane was fortunate in that she had the means and support to do so, for in the case of most women this was not an option. Despite the new laws, numbers involved in divorce proceedings remained insignificant (divorce figures for England and Wales rose, in the three years from 1857, from four to only 150) and give a false representation of the true incidence of marital breakup. What is significant within these figures, however, is that wives accounted for between 40 and 45 per cent of the registered petitions. [145]

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[1] Vaughan, *Welsh Proverbs with English Translations*, no 1918, p.277.

[2] This point is also made with regard to female poverty in Northumberland, Long, *Conversations in Cold Rooms*, p.204; it is equally as pertinent to women in south-west Wales as elsewhere.

[3] G.J. Lewis, "The Demographic structure of a Welsh rural village during the mid-nineteenth century", *Ceredigion*, V (1964-67), p.297.

[4] Roy Nash, "Family and economic structure in nineteenth-Century Wales", p.138.

[5] Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquites and Biography of South Wales*, p. 608.

[6] Jenkins, *The agricultural community in south-west Wales*, pp.143-147.

[7] Williams, *The old farmhouse*, pp.128-131

[8] Ibid.,

[9] For examples of different techniques for foretelling future partners, see chapter 1 of Davies, *Folklore of West and Mid Wales*.

[10] For a full account of fairs and the role they played in matters of courtship, see Catrin Stevens, *Welsh courting customs* (Llandysul, 1993), pp.34-42; in Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire, for instance, girls would be "fetched" and "drawed" by different boys each bearing gifts.

[11] Ibid.; see also Davies, *Folklore of West and Mid-Wales*, pp.2-3.

[12] Stevens, *Welsh courting customs*, pp.40-42.

[13] P.P., 1893-94, XXXV1, *The Agricultural Labourer*

[14] Stevens, *Welsh courting customs*, p.42.

[15] Ibid., pp. 43-50 for a fuller account of occasions which were used by young people for meeting and courting. The many accounts of cases of affiliation or sexual abuse related in the local newspapers can be used to corroborate this evidence.

[16] Owen, *The Customs and Traditions of Wales; a pocket guide* (Cardiff, 1991), p.15.

[17] PP.P., 1847, XXV11, *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, p.60; nonconformist evening schools where young people met to study for the pwnc (scriptural examinations) were said to encourage immorality amongst young people.

[18] Jenkins, *The agricultural community in south-west Wales*, p.125.

[19] Davies, *Folklore of West and Mid Wales*, p.4.

[20] *C.J.*, 20 February 1857; Stevens, *Welsh courting customs*, pp.145-146 and 165-183.

[21] Davies, *Folklore of West and Mid Wales*, p.4.

[22] Girls in service for instance were afforded greater freedom in choosing a husband. In some ways, the further down the social scale a girl stood the less constraints she had, Rosemary O'Day, *The Family and family relationships, 1500-1900: England, France and the United States of America* (Basingstoke, 1994), p.148.

[23] Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, p.28.
[24] Alwyn D. Rees, *Life in a Welsh Countryside* (Cardiff, 1951), pp.84-85.
[25] Parry-Jones, *Welsh country upbringing*, p.86.
[26] Evans, *Letters Written During a Tour through South Wales*, p.259.
[27] P.P., 1839, XV11, Appendix B to the *6th Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, p.492.
[28] P.P., XXV1, *Seventh ARMOHPC for 1864*, p.500.
[29] P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, p.599.
[30] Jenkins, *The agricultural community in south-west Wales*, p.129.
[31] Anderson, *Family structure in nineteenth century Lancashire*, p.86.
[32] Jenkins *The agricultural community in south-west* Wales, p.126.
[33] *C.J.*, 16 April 1858.
[34] A. Bailey Williams, "Courtship and marriage in the nineteenth century", *Montgomery Collections*, 51 (1949), p.120. When accounting for this behaviour, Alwyn D Rees dismisses local explanations of "jealousy", and, instead, refers to other European countries such as Sweden and Switzerland, where similar actions, instigated by young men's guilds, were imposed as "punishment" for those who broke the rule of courtship which excluded suitors from other villages. This, he suggests, ties in with the traditional Welsh preference of marriage within kinship groups. See Rees, *Life in a Welsh Countryside*, p.84.
[35] *C.J.*, 5 March 1852.
[36] *C.J.*, 22 April 1853.
[37] N.L.W. MS. 87: Chancellor John Fisher, "An Address on old Welsh Marriage Customs", delivered in 1916.
[38] Williams, *The old farmhouse*, pp.97-98.
[39] Parry-Jones, *Welsh country upbringing*, p.86.
[40] Evans, "The Land and its People", p.35.
[41] *C.J.*, 6 March 1868 and 24 April 1868.
[42] Charles Ashton, "Bywyd gwledig Yn Nghymru, Dinas Mawddwy", *Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Bangor*, (1891).
[43] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.64.
[44] Williams, "Courtship and marriage in the nineteenth century", p.121.
[45] Jones, *Atgofion Ruth Mynachlog*, p.8.
[46] Williams, "Courtship and marriage in the nineteenth century", p.121.
[47] Williams, *The old farmhouse*, pp.232-233.
[48] P.P., 1893-94, XXXV1, *The Agricultural Labourer*, p.69.
[49] P.P., 1847, XXV11, *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, p.437.
[50] *C.J.*, 9 January 1846.
[51] P.P., 1847, XXV11, *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, p.422.
[52] N.L.W., Transcripts of parish registers for Pembrey and Abergwilli : marriages 1813-1837.
[53] N.L.W. MS. 11845B: Transcript of Machynlleth Parish Registers. This reference was kindly furnished by Mr. Bryn Jones. I also extend my thanks to Mr.Nick Woodward for his help in calculating the mean ages.
[54] E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: a reconstruction* (Cambridge, 1981), p.255.
[55] Bridget Hill, "The marriage age of women and the demographers", *History Workshop Journal*, 28 (1989), p.131.
[56] Nash, "Family and Economic Structure in Nineteenth-Century Wales", p.138; G.J. Lewis, "The demographic structure of a Welsh rural village", p.297.
[57] Evans, *Letters Written During a Tour Through South Wales*, p354. For an analysis of the various forms of marriage that occurred earlier in Wales, including the besom wedding, see Howell, *The Rural Poor in Eighteenth-Century Wales*, pp.146-148.
[58] Evans, *A Tour Through North Wales*, pp.359-360.
[59] Lawrence Stone, *Road to Divorce, England 1530-1987* (Oxford, 1990), p.64.

[60] Gillis, *For better, for worse*, p.109.
[61] *Cambrian*, 30 December1820; for descriptions of big weddings and their function within the community, see Gillis, *For better, for worse*, pp.56-57.
[62] *C.J.*, 15 November 1867.
[63] K.K. *Wales and its People* (London, 1878,), pp.52-53.
[64] Olive Anderson, "Civil Marriage in Victorian England and Wales", *Past and Present*, 66-69 (1975), pp.72- 79. Accounting for this popularity in rural districts of Wales has proved to be no easy matter. Anderson suggests that it grew as a result of a variety of "different feelings and experiences – strongly evangelical and anti-sacerdotal religious faith and practice, nationalism, class antagonism, internal cultural divisions and sheer geographical and economic isolation".
[65] Jenkins, *The agricultural community in south-west Wales*, p.137.
[66] Howell, *The Rural Poor in Eighteenth-Century Wales*, p.56.
[67] Jones, *Atgofion Ruth Mynachlog*, p.9.
[68] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, pp.91; See also Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, p.36-37.
[69] As said by J. Coleridge in *Re. Cochrane*, 1840, and quoted in Maeve E. Doggett, *Marriage, wife-beating and the law in Victorian England* (London, 1992), pp.16, 97-98; some indication of the inferior status of wives before the law as compared with their husbands, is provided by the example of Ann Davies who was due to appear in court after charging her old employer with non-payment of wages. Having married, her case, to be heard at Llanelli petty sessions, was further adjourned until she had issued a new summons in her husband's name, *C.J.*, 22 June 1855.
[70] Evans, *Letters Written During a Tour through South Wales in the year 1803*, p.349.
[71] Both anthropological and historical sources appear to illustrate this point, see Scott and Tilly,"Women's work and the family", p.53, while folklorist accounts, proverbs and peasants' language are used to argue the complementary nature of marital relations in Segalen, *Love and power in the peasant family*, p.9.
[72] Davidoff, L'esperance and Newby, "Landscape with Figures", p.163.
[73] Shani D' Cruze, *Crimes of outrage : sex, violence and Victorian working women* (London, 1998), p.68. When discussing incidents of wife-beating in Ireland, it has been argued that domestic violence was inevitable, for while husbands had control, the basis of marriage remained inherently unequal, see Elizabeth Steiner-Scott, "'To Bounce a Boot off her Now and then. . .': Domestic Violence in Post-Famine Ireland", in Maryann Gialanella Valiulis and Mary O'Dowd, (eds.), *Women and Irish History* (Dublin, 1997), p.127.
[74] *Cambrian*, 7 September 1805.
[75] J.M. Beattie, *Crime and the courts in England, 1660-1800* (Oxford, 1986), pp.74 and 134.
[76] W.G. Evans, "Secondary and higher education for girls and women in Wales, 1847-1920" (unpublished Ph.D.thesis, University of Wales, 1987), p.22. Much of the following discussion regarding the perceived place and role of wives within the family is taken from the above source.
[77] Williams, "The true 'Cymraes' : Images of Women on Women's Nineteenth-Century Welsh Periodicals", p.74.
[78] Williams, *The old farmhouse*, pp.140-143.
[79] There has been speculation as to whether Sir Francis Buller actually made this remark. That there is no evidence of his having done so in law reports suggests that his pronouncement was not made in an official capacity, see Doggett, *Marriage, Wife-Beating and the Law in Victorian England*, p.7.
[80] R. Emerson Dobash and Russell Dobash, *Violence against wives: a case against patriarchy* (Shepton Mallet, 1980), p.139,
[81] *C.J.*, 14 August 1857.
[82] N.L.W., C.G.S. 4/758/1/64.
[83] *C.J.*, 9 March 1811 and 20 April 1811; see also an account of the murders by R. Winston Jones, *The Haverfordwest Borough Police* (Haverfordwest, 1989).
[84] D' Cruze, *Crimes of outrage: sex, violence and Victorian working women*, pp.20-21.
[85] Family violence was not instigated solely by fathers; other family members were capable of bullying also. In a display of sibling rivalry over a piece of potato ground, for example, Titus Jones knocked his heavily pregnant sister down to the floor and proceeded to kick her in the stomach, *C.J.*, 11

April 1856. For cases where sons abused their mothers, see *C.J.*, 30 April 1858, 8 May 1857, 17 April 1857, 31 May 1867.

[86] *C.J.*, 4 December 1868.

[87] *C.J.*, 7 July 1854.

[88] *C.J.*, 9 August 1861, 9 December 1859.

[89] *C.J.*, 24 April 1868, 22 September 1854, 20 March 1846,19 December 1856 are only a few examples of drunken assaults by husbands on their wives.

[90] P.P., 1847, XXV11, *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, p.282; Lambert, *Drink and Sobriety*, p.102.

[91] *C.J.*, 21 October 1859.

[92] Examining cases of wife-beating is interesting for valuable insight can be gained into how men perceived a wife's role at a particular time and vice versa.

[93] *C.J.*, 17 January 1862.

[94] *C.J.*, 7 May 1864. Expecting the wife to make food at odd hours, perhaps late in the night, coming home hungry from a journey or from a public house was a favourite cause of marital discord, see also *C.J.*, 12 November 1858, 8 January 1864.

[95] *C.J.*, 13 November 1868. Conley maintains that women in group situations were peceived as trouble makers; in the wifebeater's eyes, therefore, wives were best kept apart so as to retain their isolation and vulnerability. Carolyn A. Conley, *The unwritten law: criminal justice in Victorian Kent* (New York, Oxford, 1991), p.80.

[96] *C.J.*, 4 June 1858; *Milford Haven and Haverfordwest Telegraph*, 2 June 1858.

[97] *C.J.*, 27 October 1854 and 16 March 1855; see also *C.J.*, 4 May 1849 for an account of Thomas Davies of the parish of Llanwenog who, suspecting his wife of infidelity, killed both her and his twelve-month-old daughter.

[98] A series of subsequent bills were introduced to insert the penalty of flogging for more serious assaults but, in keeping with the mood of the time, in moving away from corporal punishments and also fear of reprisals on wives by flogged husbands, the bills were rejected. Interestingly, the first Aggravated Assaults Bill of 1856 was introduced by the Member of Parliament for Swansea, Mr. Dillwyn, who argued that the 1853 legislation was ineffective in curbing violent assaults on women. He suggested short prison sentences in conjunction with mandatory flogging. Wives would thus not be without financial support for a long period and the number of assaults would diminish. For more on the 1853 Act and the debate on flogging, Doggett, *Marriage, Wife-beating and the Law*, pp. 106-111. In 1878, however, further legislation, with the Amendment to the Matrimonial Causes Act, enabled magistrates, when husbands were convicted of aggravated assaults on their wives, to make separation orders with maintenance payments.

[99] Parry-Jones, *My own folk*, pp.117-118; in other places different ways might be used to shame wife-beaters. In Monmouthshire, for instance, when it was known that the husband had ill used his wife, it was customary to tie straw on the front of the couple's gate so that he might beat the straw instead of his wife, see *Bygones*, 24 May 1893, p.86.

[100] Traditionally used as punishment for "scolds" and dominating wives, by the nineteenth century, shaming rituals came to be used on wife-beaters. It has been suggested that, by this time, women were viewed as less threatening to the patriarchal order as they were becoming more dependant on men as protectors and providers. Jones, "Women, Community and Collective Action", p.28. Hammerton warns against putting too much emphasis on the changing nature of ceffyl pren, however, and for overstating the case of intolerance towards wife-beating, James Hammerton, *Cruelty and companionship: conflict in nineteenth century married life* (London,1992), pp.16-21.

[101] *Welshman*, 3 October 1834.

[102] *C.J.*, 27 October 1854. Conley writes that the reluctance to interfere stemmed in part from the notion that the wife was the property of her husband; neighbours would only interfere when the attacks were seen as "excessive, clearly unjustified or too public", Conley, *The Unwritten Law*, pp.76-77.

[103] C.R.O. MS. 110: Carmarthen Borough Police Diaries, 20 September 1858.

[104] *C.J.*, 6 February 1857.

[105] Jones, *Crime in nineteenth-century Wales*, p.20. A common concern at the time was that if punishment against offenders was increased, not only would numbers of prosecutions decrease, but there would be less chance of reconciliation between husband and wife.
[106] *C.J.*, 29 February 1856.
[107] *C.J.*, 3 October 1856.
[108] *C.J.*, 6 April 1855.
[109] Anon., *The Story of Tenby*, p.173.
[110] Caradog Evans, *My People: stories of the peasantry of West Wales* (London, 1919), pp.131-132.
[111] See the extracts from *Cyfaill y Werin*, 20 December 1861 and *Y Brython*, II. no. 1 (1858), cited in Jones, "'Separate Spheres': women, language and respectability in Victorian Wales", pp.184-185.
[112] Jefferies, *Hodge and his Masters*, p.89.
[113] Jones, *Crime in nineteenth-century Wales*, p.83.
[114] Anna Clark, "Humanity or Justice", in Carol Smart, (ed.), *Regulating womanhood: historical essays on marriage, motherhood and sexuality* (London, 1992), p.193.
[115] Between 1870-1874, 41 per cent of assaults reported and subsequently dealt with by chief constables were on women and children, and although it is impossible to separate these figures, an estimate at the time maintained that 4/5ths were on women, and "ordinary" assaults were not included, R.Emerson Dobash and Russell Dobash, *Violence against wives: a case against patriarchy* (Shepton Mallet, 1980) p.70,
[116] *C.J.*, 21 March 1856.
[117] *C.J.*, 5 January 1849.
[118] *C.J.*, 4 August 1848.
[119] Jones, *Crime in nineteenth-century Wales*, pp.93-94.
[120] *C.J.*, 6 July 1855; see also 6 February 1857. Professor Jones argues that chief constables demanded evidence of repeated physical injuries before they would allow their men to get involved in such cases. Jones, *Crime in nineteenth-century Wales*, pp.83.
[121] Legal sanctions could be undermined by prevailing attitudes. Where there was evidence of a wife's bad behaviour, incidences of physical abuse were seen as a chastisement or self-defence and were treated with leniency; Conley, *The Unwritten Law*, p.74.
[122] *C.J.*, 19 July 1850.
[123] *Pembrokeshire Herald*, 13/1/1860.
[124] *C.J.*, 29 April 1864.
[125] *C.J.*, 17 January 1851.
[126] *C.J.*, 19 May 1848.
[127] For a comprehensive account of the common law as it related to married women, see Lee Holcombe, *Wives and property: reform of the Married Woman's Property Law in nineteenth-century England* (Oxford, 1983).
[128] Doggett, *Marriage, wife-beating and the law in Victorian England*; see *C.J.*, 28 October 1859 for an example.
[129] P.P., 1836, XX1X, pt.1, 2nd. *Annual Report of the Poor Law Commission*: Mr. Clive's report on the Carmarthen Union.
[130] For a sample of wife desertion cases, see *C.J.*, 1 February 1856, 5 August 1853, 19 December 1851, 1 December 1848, 8 May 1863, 26 February 18 and 2 May 1862.
[131] *C.J.*, 11 March 1859.
[132] *C.J.*, 17 January 1851.
[133] *C.J.*, 28 July 1854.
[134] Lawrence Stone, *Road to Divorce, England 1530-1987* (Oxford, 1990), p.142. Stone maintains that the number of bigamists in early modern England was quite large given the difficulty in detection and acquiring the necessary finance to prosecute.
[135] *C.J.*, 4 March 1859. The oddly-named Oliver Cromwell Howell was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for marrying a sixteen-year-old girl at Llandilo Fawr after telling her he was a single man. Finding out differently, she left him after 6 weeks; *C.J.* 1 March 1867.
[136] *C.J.*, 7 March 1851, 14 March 1851 and 21 March 1851; see also 19 May 1854 for another case.
[137] *C.J.*, 4 March 1859.

[138] *C.J.*, 6 Februbary 1852.
[139] Stone, *Road to Divorce*, p.356-357.
[140] For a full account of wife-sales, see Thompson, *Customs in Common*, pp.406-466; see also Samuel Pyeatt Menefree, *Wives for sale: an ethnogaphic study of British popular divorce* (Oxford, 1981). The custom was not peculiar to Britain, for similar ones occurred in China, Scotland, Italy and Ireland.
[141] Menefree, *Wives for sale*, p.32.
[142] Howell, *Patriarchs and Parasites*, p.204; Thompson argues that wife-sales were found most frequently in more mobile, money-economy plebeian societies, Thompson, *Customs in Common*, p.446.
[143] *Swansea Journal*, 1 March 1843. This case clearly illustrates the hopelessness of many women's situation before the law, for it was said that after selling her, Anne's husband then sold her bed in order to buy a suit of clothes. It is to be wondered whether the notion of possession and wife-sale lay behind the actions of the Carmarthen man who, in early January 1833, led his wife of three weeks by the halter to the banks of the river Towy and pushed her into the water. She was only saved by the timely interventions of some passers-by who rescued her in a boat, *Welshman*, 5 January 1833.
[144] *C.J.*, 25 June 1858 and 4 March 1859.
[145] Stone, *Road to Divorce*, pp.383 – 388.

7

A Question of Sex

"Tri pheth tebyg y naill i'r llail : ysgubawr deg heb yd ; mail deg heb ddiawd ; a merch deg heb ei geirda".

A splendid cup that holds no wine;
Big barn that keeps no corn;
Such is a woman fair, and fine,
Of reputation shorn. [1]

Extra-marital Sex

A woman's honour and reputation in Welsh society rested to a large degree on her sexual behaviour and morality, for while men were judged by a wider range of values and behavioural norms, women were judged predominently by their sexual virtue, and especially their chastity with regard to extra-marital activity. Central to the underlying attitudes regarding women was the concept of the double standard of sexuality, whereby female sexual behaviour was viewed differently to that of the male. Male unchastity is regarded far more leniently than a woman's, " . . unchastity, in the sense of sexual relations before marriage or outside marriage, is for a man, if an offense, none the less a mild and pardonable one, but for a woman a matter of utmost gravity".[2] Enduringly powerful, the double standard permeated all aspects of a woman's sexual life outside marriage, and its influence affected her behaviour, her family, her reputation, both within the community and outsiders' perception, and, highly evident within criminal and legal

procedures, her rights as a citizen. Although for most women of the lower orders a degree of latitude had traditionally existed with regard to their pre-marital sexual behaviour, the imposition of stricter standards of morality by a less-than-tolerant but influential minority through prescriptive and legal means came to further restrict women's actions and bound them even more to the notion of respectability through, above all, strict sexual virtuousness. If attitudes towards gender in the eighteenth century leaned heavily against women, who, according to one historian, were ". . victims of male brutality, harsh laws and patriarchal attitudes", the same unsympathetic stance towards female sexual behaviour equally applied to the morality-driven nineteenth century when they were, in addition, heavily burdened with rigid and unrealistic ideals of womanhood. [3]

Throughout the period under discussion, pre-marital sex was an accepted part of rural life and, judging by the anecdotal evidence regarding pre-nuptial pregnancies, was widely practised. In Tregaron, one clergyman of long-standing recalled in 1813 that he had served in his parish for 29 years and, for the whole of that lengthy period, he had married only one couple where the bride was not pregnant, and that was because she was 57 years of age.[4] Later, in 1847, the Revd. Buckley calculated that out of 70 marriages in his parish of Begelly, the hamlet of Williamstown and adjoining parishes, only in 6 cases was the bride not visibly pregnant.[5] Similarly, the Revd. Lewis, the rector and rural Dean of Lampeter Velfrey in Pembrokeshire, at the close of the 1860s confirmed that it was a rare occasion for a young woman of the labouring classes to be married before she was a mother or about to become one.[6] Much of the responsibility for the situation was attributed to the accepted custom of night courting or "bundling" which, taking place either in the downstairs or bedroom of the girl's home or workplace, allowed for greater intimacy among couples. [7] A practical arrangement, the custom facilitated opportunities towards courtship

for young people committed to long working hours and who had few other opportunities or venues within which to meet. Generally leading to sexual intimacy, despite the references to bolsters used as dividing lines between the couple, and other such refinements, bundling acted as a pre-cursor to matrimony for most, although this was not necessarily so in some cases. [8] Within the church or chapel no great censure was reserved for pre-marital pregnancy, for when a couple did marry they were put under an interdict for a short time and then re-admitted. [9]

While this tacit requirement on the part of the religious bodies presented a local solution for accommodating a customary practice, at the same time throughout the nineteenth century pre-marital sex with all its connotations was being attacked by Welsh evangelicals and middle-class moralists who viewed night-courting and especially bundling with scorn, not a little embarrassment and, more importantly, as accountable for contributing towards the high illegitimacy levels existing in predominantly rural Wales.[10] Making concerted efforts to eradicate pre-marital sex and bundling by campaigning through denominational periodicals and encouraging anti-bundling societies, reformers' efforts to stamp out the practice were intensified by the exposure of Welsh girls' supposed immorality in the Education Commissioners' notorious "Blue Books" in 1847, the publication of which came to trigger a heated defence of Welsh womenfolk. [11] While statements alleging the gross lack of chastity amongst females in Wales and its grave implications for future generations were hotly disputed by its critics, who clamoured to find comparable figures of illegitimacy rates in other countries with which to defend the Welsh situation, the report provoked a further growth of societies dedicated to eradicating the crime of bundling from Wales' shores. [12] One, formed at Henllan, near Cardigan, consisted of members drawn from the "heads of many of the most influential and respectable families" who pledged not to employ any girls whom they knew to be guilty of such a heinous

crime. Subscriptions were paid to a parish's clergyman who, in turn, was responsible for administering suitable amounts as gifts to deserving couples whom he had married in the preceding year.[13] Elsewhere, eisteddfodau competition essays were set on topics relating to the question of immorality and, within some chapels, persons admitting to the practice of bundling were excommunicated. [14]

The greatest concerns over immorality caused by bundling centred on farm servants. When offering suggestions as how to improve the moral tone of young people in farm service, only females were singled out as targets. Two local landowners recommended in a letter to the freeholders and tenant farmers of the county of Carmarthen, that they refuse to employ anyone who could not produce a bone fide written character from his/her last situation and suggested it be worded as follows: "A.B. has been in my employ as a servant in husbandry for - years(or - months). I believe him, or her, to be honest, sober, cleanly and industrious and (in the case of a female) I have reason to believe that her moral conduct has been irreproachable". [15]

More tangible attempts to restrict the practice saw the windows of some farmhouses become secured by bars, yet, in reality, many employers were reluctant to deter their servants from bundling for fear of losing them.[16] Down to the late 1860s, it was still quite customary for maidservants to stipulate, as part of their work contract, that they be allowed to entertain their sweethearts in the farmhouse at night.[17] Margaret Evans, a servant in husbandry in Llandyfaelog, Carmarthenshire, was allowed to admit her lover to her employer's house on a Wednesday night, as long as the lady of the house was also present, while five years later, Mary Davies of Llangynog in the same county, arranged with her employer that she could see her lover at any time, except on a Saturday night, in the kitchen, but was not allowed to go to bed with him.[18] Any attempts to abolish these rights were likely to be met with defiance, walk-outs

or even violence and visits to court for judgement on the cessation of service. Both the aforementioned Margaret and Mary ceased their employment after altercations with their employers over their respective courtship rights. Escorting her home after chapel, Mary's lad was assaulted by the girl's employer who had taken exception to his presence in the farmhouse kitchen at midnight. At the petty sessions at St. Clears the Bench discharged the maidservant from her service, while ordering her wages to be paid up to that date.[19]

It was not only bundling that was seen as contributing to the moral downfall of Wales' womenfolk. Also blamed were the crowded conditions that existed in many of the farmhouses, where both sexes mixed and mingled together day and night. Government reports wrote of witnesses recalling instances where men and women servants slept together in lofts, separated by only the flimsiest of partitions, and even sharing rooms.[20] In addition, hiring fairs, where men and women congregated together looking for work, were also seen as conducive to gross acts of immorality.[21]

Towards the latter half of the nineteenth century, however, the agricultural districts of Wales saw an apparent decline in its immorality in so far as pre-marital sexual behaviour was concerned, and this was attributed to the influence of religion, allied with the spread of education and developed notions of what constituted respectability. It was believed by some that by being encouraged to disapprove, at school, of the old courtship habits, the farmer's daughter, in turn, came to influence the farm's maidservants to do likewise, and thus the unwillingness of the girls to allow night courting and bundling saw the custom diminish in many, albeit not all, farmhouses.[22]

If pre-marital sex was tolerated to a far lesser degree with regard to its female participants, nowhere can the concept of the double standard towards male and female sexuality

be seen more visibly than in the extra-marital sexual activities of adultery, prostitution and rape, where women were the unfortunate recipients of unequal treatment both within the community and in the face of the law. It is not surprising that even the severest critics of Welsh sexual morality were unanimous in declaring that the Principality's womenfolk, once married, rarely strayed from the marital bed. Any sexual indiscretion on their part could provoke severe retribution from their spouse, ruin their reputation within the community and result in a broken marriage and the loss of a home, with all its attendant consequences.[23] Unlike their wives, men were subjected neither to the same stringent standards of sexual behaviour nor to the dangers of being cut off and abandoned. It is no wonder that David Jones, referring to the many married men summoned to the Welsh courts on affiliation charges, was to observe that it "was the women who kept more faithfully to the wedding vows".[24]

The penalties for female infidelity were considerable. Hints or innuendoes that a woman had behaved adulterously were treated with great seriousness by the party so accused. Once married, a woman was expected to adhere to her wedding vows of faithfulness and obedience, and any aberration from this path was widely condemned. When Anne Wilkinson, a married Irish woman, was found drunk in the company of two soldiers and was summoned before the Bench in the Townhall of Carmarthen to account for her drunken behaviour, it was commented that while it was a pity for any female to have to answer the charge, it was even more so for a married woman, and that it was a disgrace that she had been in the company of soldiers.[25] Proven infidelity could mean a cessation of any economic advantages to be gained as a wife, for a husband was not expected to support an adulterous partner. When the overseers of the parish of Llanfihangel Abercywyn in Carmarthenshire brought Benjamin Eves, a switchman on the Swansea Valley Junction railways, to task for not supporting his wife, on receipt of a signed

confession admitting her adultery with a lodger, they agreed that he was not liable to maintain her.[26] Those who actually absconded with their lovers were labelled "worthless" in a reporting press which avidly recorded in print anything taken from the marital home, for as all assets belonged, as seen earlier, by law to the husband, anything taken was tantamount to stealing. The wife who ran away from the Bryn, in Llanelli, to be with her lover, taking with her £35 in cash and £12 worth of clothes, was thus regarded as having dealt her spouse the double insult of both betraying and robbing him. [27] One has only to examine the conditions attached to the divorce law of 1857, whereby it was only wives who had to prove grounds extra to adultery in order to qualify for a legal separation, to see the double standard of sexuality in operation. [28]

At a local level and subject to the same community mores as wife-beating and other aberrant behaviour, persistent adultery committed by women, and even in some cases, men, risked public censure and punishment by ceffyl pren rituals.[29] The commotion in September 1849 which ensued as a result of John Jenkins, a labourer at the coke-furnaces in Llanelli, throwing his three lodgers and his wife out of the house, after catching his wife committing adultery in the parlour of their home with one of them, attracted a crowd of amused bystanders at his door, who later erected a straw effigy of his wife which they paraded up and down in the street. Amongst those who proceeded to burn the effigy outside the couple's house, the most vigilant in plying the fire was said to have been their daughter of the marriage, upset and humiliated by her mother's behaviour.[30] The process of making a virtuous woman of Jane Davies saw her being set upon in Spring 1838 when returning from Llandeilo market and subjected to a medley of punishments including beatings, kicks, shaming mechanisms and - a traditional favourite for chastising women - duckings, whereby self-appointed moralists trod upon her back to keep her underwater.[31]

In a society where one's good name and self-worth depended largely on the opinion and degree of respect given by others, allegations of sexual impropriety were quickly refuted. Damage to a woman's sexual reputation by accusations and insinuations could not only affect her standing in the neighbourhood and her livelihood, but be used against relatives and close associates as weapons in confrontations and arguments. A number of avenues were open to disclaim accusations of immorality. While a swift and simple means of retribution, through personal justice by way of verbal and/or physical retaliation was the solution for those sufficiently aggrieved to endure public spectacle, redress could be sought through the jurisdiction of either the Church or the secular courts. [32]

Until 1855, when they were removed from its jurisdiction, cases for defamation were amongst the most numerous of suits tried before the Consistory courts in south-west Wales. The traditional method of dealing with cases of a moral or spiritual nature in the years from 1780 to 1855, there were, on average, at least five such cases heard annually within the Archdeaconry of Carmarthen, one of the four Archdeaconries lying within the jurisdiction of the Diocese of St. David's in south Wales.[33] The overwhelming majority of cases were brought by women who, almost exclusively, sought to clear their name after having been publicly maligned by allegations of sexual immorality.[34] Here, the evidence in south-west Wales was no different from that heard before Consistory courts in English dioceses. The majority of defamation suits brought before the Church's Consistory courts everywhere were brought by women determined to restore their good name, for, as Laura Gowing has explained when examining earlier defamation cases in London, " attacks on women for whatever grounds could home in on their sexual behaviour, the most effective basis for assault".[35] Again, as found elsewhere, although in the Consistory court of the Archdeaconry of Carmarthen women of all marital status brought

actions, a majority of cases heard were instigated by married women, which suggests that a female's reputation after marriage was even more vulnerable than when she was of single status. That a husband's esteem and good standing in society rested, undoubtedly, to some extent upon the restoration of his wife's good name, meant that, in some cases, a joint action of complaint was lodged by both husband and wife.

With the exception of the higher gentry and the very poor, actions for defamation of character in the period 1780-1830 involved all sections of south-west Wales society, both as instigators of suits and as defendants. The very rich would not have wanted their names dragged through the courts, while the high financial cost incurred if the case proved unsuccessful, for witness costs and Proctor's and court fees were often substantial, would have deterred the poor.[36] (If the case was proven, of course, those found guilty would meet the costs, but although admonished and compelled to retract the words uttered, they were not asked to furnish financial damages.) As the popularity of the Church courts waned, and as the Church began to lose its spiritual grip, potential plaintiffs, lured by the prospect of damages being awarded, increasingly brought slander and defamation cases to the civil courts. As would be expected in a largely agricultural community, many of the plaintiffs were farmers' wives, but also represented amongst the numbers were the wives of gentlemen, as well as those married to artisans and tradesmen, including victuallers, shoemakers, carpenters, cordwainers, butchers and even labourers. As always, however, the widows and spinsters cited remain tantalisingly elusive to any other form of categorisation. Of those accused of defamation, a good proportion, approximately 62 per cent, were, interestingly, women.

The peculiarly formalised and precise language used in Church courts for defamation cases served to emphasise the very sexual nature of the abuse spoken. Hence Elizabeth Bowen

of Narberth in Pembrokeshire brought a successful case, heard in early summer 1834, against a neighbour, Mary Duckfield, who had previously abused her, "You are a Damned Poxy whore. You were with the Cardigan Militia when at Haverfordwest", amongst other accusations.[37] Later that year, Mary Evan, a married woman, sought an apology and retraction from carpenter David Davies, who had said to her, in front of witnesses, "Where are you going? Do you remember the old workshop, I have been on top of you a hundred times", and who, furthermore, had called attention to her appearance, saying, "You large-lipped bitch, my backside is cleaner than your face."[38] After repeatedly calling into question the paternity of the son of Mary Morgan, a vistualler's wife, by declaring that, "That is an Englishman" (referring to her son), "It is not John (that is, her husband) is the father of that there" (pointing to the boy), Morris Jones of Llanbadarn Fawr then accused her lodger of being the boy's real father, "The Englishman is his father - Martin Wren is his father." In doing so, the man was bringing Mary's sexual honour into question, in a way which could have had damaging repercussions for the whole family. The words, therefore, were of sufficient provocation to bring the defamed woman to lodge an action against him.[39] Meanwhile, derogatory words spoken about her maternal family, calling both her, her mother and grandmother, whores, were enough to compel Mary Jones to take John Jones of Carmarthen to court so that their names could be cleared.[40] It was no coincidence that the specialised language used in the Consistory courts featured "whore" as its pejorative noun in statements made by complainants. Deliberately chosen to emphasis the enormity of the insult, classification as prostitute was without doubt the most damning sexual slur that could be levelled against women. Above all in the nineteenth century, with its strict codes of moral respectability, attitudes towards sexuality can be best conceptualised by the imagery depicted in the Madonna and Magdalen potrayals: the one, sexually pure, genteel, home-loving and duty-bound

contrasting with her complete antithesis, that is, the debased, dishonest, sexually predatory woman of the streets, the prostitute. [41]

The actual incidence of prostitution in south-west Wales is hard to determine. As "prostitute" and "unfortunate", both nouns with similar meaning, were used derogatively to classify unruly females, and the terms were often used to describe those brought to court for behaving disreputably, it is difficult to ascertain who actually did or did not earn a living in this way (the two ringleaders of the Swansea Corn Riots of 1801, for instance, were described accordingly). That prostitution, we have already noted, represented a temporary solution only, for most women adds to the confusion. Not surprisingly, women themselves objected vehemently against any such classification, pleading other occupations, as did one twenty-year-old who, when coming before magistrates on a charge of stealing, insisted, rather, that she was a charwoman. [42]

It was defensively argued in 1879 by one newspaper editor, that prostitution did not occur in Wales to anything like the extent that it did in England.[43] Albeit frowned upon in the countryside, where, it was said, "a common woman would be scouted out", it was inevitable, as has been noted, that casual prostitution constituted a very real alternative to starvation, whether in town or country.[44] Most instances of prostitution in south-west Wales would have occurred wherever high percentages of unattached or migrant men featured amongst the population. Congregating mainly in dockland areas of towns, prostitutes frequented the inns and taverns looking for likely customers.

The township of Pembroke Dock which, as a site of an Admiralty dockyard constructed in 1814 supported, up to mid-century, between 400 to 500 Royal marines and, later on, the Monmouthshire Light Infantry and Montgomeryshire Rifles, came under the jurisdiction of

inspectors appointed by the Contagious Diseases Act; they proceeded to classify the place as an area of "clandestine prostitution".[45] But it was Carmarthen that was considered the real black spot for vice. Malkin, writing in the first decade of the nineteenth century, described the town as having the most relaxed morals in the whole of Wales.[46] Later, in 1832, the *Welshman* referred to the town as being one of the worst in the Empire for its size with regard to the number of "drunken and shameless women" who were said to roam there night and day, and criticized the laxity of magistrates, the "guardians of the nation's morals", for allowing the situation to occur.[47] Superintendant Kentish of the borough of Carmarthen police calculated in 1851, however, that there were only five street walkers in the town, which, compared to London's estimated 50,000, was a miniscule number, even allowing for the vast differences in population levels between the two.[48] With the trade known to be plied through common lodging houses, proprietors rented out rooms to anyone willing to pay, asking few questions as to the purpose of the rental. One such thinly-disguised brothel belonged to Eliza Evans, a married woman whose husband had absconded, leaving her to support herself and her elderly mother. It is difficult to decide whether she managed the girls herself as part of a well-organised operation, but it does appear that they worked with her full knowledge and permission and frequently used her facilities to entertain their "clients".[49]

Its common association with unmarried motherhood led advocates of the poor law reforms of 1834 to quickly link prostitution with the old system of poor relief under which, they asserted, single mothers, living in the indifferently-managed parish poor houses, were freed from all moral restraint.[50] Edmund Hill Stacey, Esq., giving evidence to the Poor Law Commissioners for 1836, went as far as to state that the poorhouse in Carmarthen had, until the previous twelve months, actually been used as a brothel by the prostitutes of the town.[51] This popularly-held

view,which might well have contained some truth, found expression in the written opinions of one highly indignant female resident of Fishguard, who forcibly argued in 1854 that prostitutes were unmarried mothers forced, through poverty, into the cheap and disreputable disease-ridden backstreets of west Wales towns. She elaborated by stating that they lived in squalid quarters with numerous children and often with an older family member, usually a grandmother. Without a husband or regular partner to support them, unwilling to send their children to the hated Union workhouse, and deemed to be undeserving of private charity, she believed that they survived on the parish relief awarded to the older women and whatever they themselves could earn from prostitution. Driven by righteous indignation to write to the *Carmarthen Journal* during the cholera epidemic of 1854, she unsympathetically, but revealingly, attributed the deaths of a number of unmarried women not to the lack of bare necessities or neglect of medical care, however, but rather as their just reward for violating God's laws by conducting their lives in this way.[52]

Despite rank disapproval of the prostitute's way of life, a degree of tolerance had always existed towards them amongst the lower classes. The diary of that crusty old Calvinist, William Thomas, records an incident at Cowbridge, Glamorganshire, in 1765, where a "notorious whore", Moll Goch, escaped the clutches of a custodian consigning her to a House of Correction by the help of a mob who "rose in her part and mobbed him out of town".[53] Many decades later, it seems that the local constabulary in Carmarthen maintained a somewhat ambiguous relationship with prostitutes, even to the extent of risking the censure of superior officers in their respective Watch Committees. At least one policeman in Carmarthen capitalised on the trade in sex by keeping a lodging house reputedly used by girls of "dubious character", and another

constable, a P.C. Phillips, was asked to resign from the force after marrying a reputed prostitute, Mary Collis, who had come to Carmarthen in pursuit of a soldier.[54]

By the mid-nineteenth century, stern Victorian morality, allied with fears of a perceived increase in criminal activity in urban areas, inevitably brought the spotlight onto prostitutes, who, mixing among the low life in towns and cities, were regarded increasingly by moralising reformers as being not only disreputable in their own activities, but also the natural consorts of thieves and others involved in criminal dealings. [55] Although, strictly speaking, not a crime itself, many of those involved in prostitution were repeatedly hauled before the magistrates in police courts to answer other offences. Women, often with colourful nicknames like Betsy Cow, Kitty my Darling and Peggy Clarach, came to the town courts charged with closely-related offences. Drunken and disorderly conduct, riotous behaviour, acting indecently, stealing, fighting and causing a disturbance created a spiral of arrest and punishment, which served only to accelerate a downward flight into further shame and degradation, for prostitutes operated under a system which sought to curb and discipline rather than to understand and rectify. Ann (Nanny) Awbery, for instance, became so well known over a thirty-year period in the mid-nineteenth century for her frequent court appearances in Carmarthen for drunkeness and disorderliness, that news of her death, in 1863, was thought deserving of an obituary. Entitled "Death of Poor Nanny", the press coverage evinced a patronising and grudging sympathy firmly denied her when alive.[56] A year before her death, in the August of 1862, she had made her one hundred and twenty-eighth appearance before the magistrates as a friendless alcoholic, her life, alternating as it did between sojourns in workhouse, police court and gaol, ending in miserable poverty and helplessness.[57]

Harshest censure was reserved for brothel keepers. Regarded as corrupting influences, they came in for especial criticism from the authorities who, recognising the misery and degradation they caused, imposed severe sentencing if they came to court. In 1808, a seventy-year-old woman was placed in the stocks and jeered at in Milford for keeping a disorderly house, after evidence indicting her having been supplied by a fourteen-year-old drum boy of the Radnor Militia.[58] Twenty years later, notorious brothel-keeper, Rebecca Lloyd, was sentenced to transportation for life at Carmarthen Great Sessions, the presiding Judge Goulburn justifying his decision by stating in court that, as she had decoyed many young females from the path of virtue and led them into vice and misery, she could not expect to stay in the country.[59] That prostitution was a response to a demand created by a particular client base appeared not an issue. The men who used women in this way, meanwhile, stayed safely hidden within the folds of anonymity.

This anonymity was not strictly the case with sexual assault, of course; even so rape and its treatment as a criminal offence stands out as a glaring example whereby the violated and innocent could be judged more severely than the violator. If sexual favours were not freely given or could not be bought women could find themselves subjected to sexual harassment, assault and even rape. One dark Thursday night in March, 1845, Elizabeth Davies, while crossing some fields making her way back to the farm where she was in service, after attending a prayer meeting, was subjected to a violent and vicious sexual attack perpetrated by William Evans, the son of a neighbouring farmer. Badly injured from her desperate struggle to free herself from his grasp, she was eventually released to struggle home as best she could, but not before her brutal attacker had extracted from her, by threats, an oath not to disclose his name. So mentally and physically scarred was she by the experience, that she refused to name her assailant

for days, and weeks after the event she was still too weak to walk without difficulty and had to be conveyed to the court hearing in Aberaeron (for she had been persuaded to instigate proceedings) by cart.[60]

Other accounts of sexual abuse, extracted from court records or press coverage of trials, similarly relate harrowing tales of farm labourers, railwaymen, militiamen, spurned lovers and others forcing themselves on women. The lonely tracks, fields, hills and isolated farms of south-west Wales provided the bleak setting for sexual attacks on females by predatory men intent on sexual gratification. Many women, like Elizabeth, found to their cost the dangers of travelling or working alone in the Welsh countryside.[61] Sexual attacks did not necessarily involve strangers, as many occurred in the dangerously more familiar surroundings of home or workplace, between females and their employers, fellow workers or neighbours, quite often men who had had their previous advances rejected or who thought they had a perfect right to appropriate a woman's body for their own gratification. Often the thin dividing line between light-hearted banter and more serious encounters was easily broken and none so easily than at the hay harvest, when the high spirits and antics of some young farm labourers could, with the encouragement of their friends, turn into sexual aggression and exploitation. The three men who raped Mary Rees after following her from the harvest field admitted in court that there had been a little romping before they left the field , but "there was no harm done". Mary, who had to receive the attentions of a surgeon for the severe pain and bruising she experienced over her bowels and across her back, legs and arms, quite rightly thought differently. [62]

Given that service was the greatest employment for girls, it is not surprising that female servants figure largely as rape victims in cases of sexual assault. Numerous examples give evidence of females suffering sexual harassment from their employers, their sons or fellow

servants. Sarah Morris was forced to leave her employment in Kidwelly, after her employer had taken "indecent liberties" with her in the farm's barn, and Mary Davies complained of being continually harassed with improper proposals from her employer. [63] Traditionally regarded as being vulnerable to sexual harassment, that this was so in west Wales has been attributed to a number of factors, not least the isolation of the settlement pattern, the lonely outdoor nature of farm work, and the cramped intimate living conditions inside farmhouses, all of which provided opportunities to take advantage of young, dependant girls. [64] Nor was there any guarantee that gender loyalties guaranteed immunity from attack, as twenty-five-year-old Anna Owen found when she was dragged into a stable at the farm she worked at in Llanbadarn, near Aberystwyth, and callously raped by a gang of four boys, who included her employer's two sons, for watching and laughing alongside them were the boys' three sisters. [65]

Most despicable of all were the assaults and rapes committed on children who were often too afraid or ignorant of what had been perpetrated upon their bodies to come forward and speak out, and, by not doing so, putting themselves in an added danger of repeated violation. Inducements of half pennies and sweets were used by eighteen-year-old James Williams on his next door neighbour's daughter, a little girl of nine, in order to acquire her co-operation in withholding from her parents the truth that he had interfered with her regularly while they were both out working.[66] Nor was sexual abuse confined to those outside the family, for the most hidden of all sexual activities, incest, occurred within the cramped and overcrowded households where close association was unavoidable. If rarely coming to light due to its secret nature and the reluctance of outsiders to interfere with family affairs, odd, isolated incidents nevertheless give concrete evidence as to its occurrence.[67] That John Lloyd slept with his daughter while his wife was made to occupy a separate bed in his workshop, was well known amongst villagers in

Velindre, Carmarthenshire, for instance, but it was only when he directed witnesses in the summer of 1782 to part of his garden where they dug up the body of a child did the matter come into the open, after which the girl was charged with infanticide.[68]

Like many other crimes of a sexual nature, the assault cases that did come to court were only a fraction of those actually committed.[69] Sexual harassment appeared, at least to some women, as an inherent part of a woman's position in a patriarchal world and was, if certainly not welcomed, at least resignedly tolerated. Doubtless, many could identify with the two female prosecution witnesses at a rape trial heard in Carmarthenshire Assizes in 1864, in which they admitted having been similarly abused by the defendant, but as both events had occurred some time previously, they had, in turn, forgiven him.[70] Even if cases were reported, a significant proportion were settled out of court by private financial compensation agreed by the victim, or, more commonly a male member of her family.[71] For a victim, the temptation to settle out of court was heightened by the awareness that the action could be lost. What sum would have been agreed upon depended on the strength of the case, severity of the attack, and the personal circumstances of the defendant. Ann Bowen's father rejected the £5 that was offered him by a known "blackguard" the night before his appearance at Llanelli Petty Sessions to answer the charges of assault brought by his daughter, while Mary Harries' father was not sure that £150 was enough to drop the case against a wealthy Hugh Crombie. [72]

Besides the occasional booing and hissing from the open galleries of courts after obviously perceived miscarriages of justice when cases were heard, there appears little evidence that members of the public were prepared to take any other action on behalf of sexually abused women. Anna Clark has pointed out that in England, apart possibly from the North Riding of Yorkshire, sexual assault was not a transgression which was punishable by community sanctions

like ceffyl pren, despite its use in relation to other types of societal crime. Rather, she found the process working in reverse, and cites cases where rough music was instead inflicted on those who did decide to prosecute for rape.[73] Whilst in Wales community disapprobation and action could likewise be brought to bear against those testifying against neighbours, there is little evidence that this actually occurred in cases of rape and sexual assault cases.[74]

Those brave or indignant enough to prosecute their assailants, were themselves subjected to an ordeal nearly as frightening as the actual assault. [75] Female prosecutors were liable to intense questioning into the most intimate details of their personal lives, while their moral standing in the community was minutely examined. Particularly humiliating for these women was the prospect of having to listen to the most damning evidence, often comprising complete fabrications, dredged up by defence lawyers from information supplied by defendants intent on avoiding a conviction. Much depended, for a successful prosecution, on the appearance and manner of the prosecutrix, who came under as much scrutiny as the person accused of perpetrating the crime. Elizabeth Watkins' appearance, personal life and aspects of her personality were subjected to the most assiduous attention in the defence's quest to find some incriminating evidence which could then be used to discredit her claims that she had been the unwilling victim of improper advances by a Baptist minister of religion who, she alleged, had used inducements of money to press his suit. Efforts made by the prosecution to brand her a liar and a woman of questionable morals resulted in a close examination of her behaviour over the course of the previous ten years. Dismissing all thoughts of Christian charity and displaying an unattractive narrowness of outlook in his simplistic attempts to support his colleague, another Baptist minister was at pains to testify that Elizabeth had twice been expelled from chapel because she had become pregnant. He further added, as an adjunct, that the charge could not

anyway be true as no-one would commit such an offence in the middle of the day (he, presumably, confined such activities to night-time).[76]

In addition to hearing unpleasant testimony regarding their characters, women had to face the dishonesty of defence witnesses intent on avoiding a conviction. The more powerful or influential the accused, the easier it was to buy or coerce witnesses to testify in his favour.[77] Family and friends committed perjury, if necessary, to support an alibi. William Evans' father swore under oath that his son was at home making rush yokes for harrowing the farm's fields at the time Elizabeth Evans was brutally attacked. Family solidarity was so much to the fore that when the weight of their evidence was enough to acquit the prisoner, his relations left the courtroom sporting ribbons by way of celebration.[78] While undoubtedly women were capable of using their sexuality subversively to gain advantage or settle grudges, accusations that they did so were used to arouse the suspicions of male jurors.[79] Women were accused of discrediting authority figures who had refused their demands and were challenged to disclaim charges that summons were issued as acts of revenge.[80] The said Hugh Crombie, the agent of Carway Colliery, maintained he had been set up by Mary Harris and her father, a fireman at the same colliery, who had been involved in an industrial dispute at the works not long before the alleged incident. [81]

Conviction rates for rape and sexual assault remained exceptionally low.[82] If little evidence was available to convict, Grand Juries were advised to ignore bills and drop charges. Fears that an acquittal could encourage similar crimes, for instance, prompted presiding judges Sir. C. Creswell, at the 1845 Spring Pembrokeshire Assizes, and Mr. Justice Vaughan in 1851, to instruct their Grand Juries to discard rape bills on the court proceedings.[83] However, what could be classed insufficient evidence was questionable. The Grand Jury sitting at Carmarthen

Great Sessions in Spring 1797 threw out a Bill charging Henry Beynon, a carpenter of Llandyfaelog, with the attempted rape of an eleven-year-old girl, despite two witnesses who testified that they heard her scream out, "Let me alone, for shame, I will tell", and found the defendant on top of the girl with his breeches unbuttoned and his penis exposed.[84] Even where evidence was deemed sufficient, guilty verdicts were rarely given. While it was stated that rape "is an accusation easy to be made and hard to be defended by the party accused", the reality, Carolyn Conley argues, was quite the reverse.[85] Given that until 1841 rape constituted a capital offence second only to murder in seriousness, judges looked for concrete evidence before hearing a case in court. Women were required to prove that they had actually resisted the assailant by showing marks of violence on their bodies or providing witnesses who had heard them scream. Conduct immediately after the incident was scrutinised, for a case would be strengthened if a victim related her experiences immediately afterwards, whereas a delayed confession was seen as questionable, while medical evidence was used to ascertain the extent of the injuries and whether penetration had occurred.[86]

Sentences were meted out depending on the severity of the crime. Hence in a case tried at Cardiganshire Spring Assizes for 1865, a defendant charged initially with raping a seventeen-year-old found his charge reduced to a mere misdemeanour when medical evidence found she was still technically a virgin.[87] Sentences of up to two years' imprisonment were imposed where rape was proven, but for lesser assaults, which were the most frequent, punishments ranged from custodial sentences to fines to cautions.[88] The severity of sentences for other crimes, when compared with the leniency shown to perpetrators of sexual offences, serves to illustrate how the latter were perceived in the scale of injury and the little value placed on a woman's honour. It has not gone unnoticed that in Pembrokeshire in 1873, a man was sentenced to ten years'

imprisonment for maiming a horse, while two others were acquitted for indecently assaulting a local girl, Ellen Hennessey.[89]

Despite the public nature of open trials, the prejudice encountered within a legal system whose sympathies were, at the very least, questionable and the low rates of convictions, feisty and courageous women still took their assailants to court to fight for justice. Not least, was the opportunity to absolve themselves of any implied collusion. A determined Catherine Jones of Ferry Side,Carmarthenshire, put up a spirited defence when two men accosted her outside a local tavern. Pulling the one's whiskers, and threatening to tell his wife, she spurned an offer of four pounds to forget about the matter, preferring to come to court instead, "in order", she explained, " to sustain my character". [90] Sarah Phillips, who brought a charge against a butcher she accused of assaulting her as she returned home from Carmarthen market, did so not because of the violence inflicted on her, but out of concern for the insult he had afforded her as a married woman and a mother of three children.[91] The maintenance of sexual honour and integrity was, for the greater proportion of the respectable women of south-west Wales, of paramount importance and to be preserved at all costs.

The Dilemma of Illegitimacy

It is difficult to ascertain just how condemnatory attitudes were towards illegitimacy in nineteenth-century rural Wales. While pre-marital sex culminating in marriage was an accepted part of Welsh rural life for much of the nineteenth century, even if increasingly frowned upon by morality-laiden evangelicals, a much more equivocal viewpoint was held regarding illegitimacy. When looking at societal attitudes towards sexuality in nineteenth-century rural Kent, Reay has argued that pre-marital sex was viewed as part of the normal sexual culture in communities and

that the social stigma of illegitimacy was not so pronounced as nineteenth-century moralists would have us believe and that, moreover, it certainly did not prevent women from later marrying men other than their offspring's father. [92]

Wales at mid-century, according to Irish historian K.Connell, manifested a considerably more tolerant view of illegitimacy compared to Ireland, where greater community disapproval, allied with early marriage, economic pressure and the power of the Church, at confessional and parish priest level, accounted for the lower levels of illegitimacy found amongst the Irish. [93] Certainly in Wales illegitimate children did not appear to suffer unduly from any disgrace by their circumstances of birth. In the rural communities in north Wales, for instance, a child could be brought up either by the girl's family, or boarded out within the local community, and, in many cases, the child came to regard the biological mother as an elder sister, and this was accepted by the community at large.[94] Within the ranks of the gentry, fathers had a long tradition of looking after their own illegitimate offspring, and some took steps to provide for them in their wills. [95]

Nevertheless, D.Parry-Jones writing on *later* nineteenth-century Carmarthenshire, indicates that by dint of the growing condemnation on the part of the Anglican Church and especially the nonconformist chapels of the "sin" of fornication, the *respectable* in society saw pregnancy outside marriage as shameful. The family of a pregnant girl, for instance, would attempt to keep the news a secret, a feat practically impossible to achieve in Welsh neighbourhoods, while the girl herself would adopt a low profile by not venturing out in public until perhaps a year after the birth.[96] Open to greater censure than the married couple, female chapel-goers bearing an illegitimate child would have the indignity of being openly expelled from chapel attendance and suffer the further public humiliation of having to beg re-admittance

as full communicating members. According to James Williams, a spectator at such events in his native Pembrokeshire, it was a degrading ordeal which never failed to arouse his feelings of spiritual nausea. Recalling one instance being dealt with in the "Gyfeillach" of the Baptist chapel to which he belonged, the Minister reviewing the case spoke of "our sister who has trangressed and fallen....and who has now come in all humility... to beg acceptance again as one of the community of God. Did it accord with the wishes of the Gyfeillach for her to be re-admitted ?" [97]

Adding to the moralistic prejudices against illegitimacy were, of course, the costs to be incurred in providing for a child and its mother out of the parish funds. When mothers of illegitimate children had no means of support or hailed from the impoverished elements of society, as was often the case, the burden of financing the offspring was shouldered by the community. When, like so many parts of Europe from the second half of the eighteenth century, Wales saw a dramatic rise in illegitimacy levels, local ratepayers were justifiably concerned. [98]

Single women suspected of being pregnant, therefore, became the subjects of close scrutiny by members of the community anxious to protect themselves from having to maintain yet more children on the rates at a time when the numbers claiming poor relief were already high. Parish officers were expected to be especially vigilant with regard to illegitimacy, and so much so, in fact, that it was resolved at Mynachlog-ddu Vestry in north Pembrokeshire in the summer of 1801 that if any of the above neglected their duties, but especially those relating to pregnant women likely to become chargeable to the parish, they, themselves, would be prosecuted according to law. [99] In efforts to indemnify the parish, a couple would be pressed to marry, whether they wished to or not. At one October vestry meeting at the Carmarthenshire parish of Abernant, in 1781, parishioners agreed to despatch three men to Carmarthen to find

reluctant bridegroom, John Joel, and, at the same time, agreed to pay for a marriage licence and the expenses of the ensuing marriage.[100]

For women faced with the prospect of single motherhood on parish relief, the saying "better a bad husband than no husband at all" rang true.[101] Nevertheless many were harassed by poor law officials into agreeing to attend "voluntary" examinations in front of a local magistrate in order to reveal the identity of the putative fathers.[102] Failure to comply with the bastardy laws served only to invite trouble. In some cases, it appears that physical coercion was employed by some over zealous parish officials towards those reluctant to co-operate, but whether other girls were subjected to the same degree of violence that Susan Owen was forced to endure when she refused to go to Withybush, near Haverfordwest, to swear an affiliation order is unknown. Severely assaulted in the kiln, where she had been drying corn, by the constable employed to take her before the magistrates, she was dragged outside onto the street by her hair, and there treated, as one witness described, "the same as a dog".[103]

For some women, refusal to name the father of their child, or persistently bearing illegitimate children, resulted in gaol sentences of up to 18 months, as permitted by an Act dating from 1733. It appears from a sample of Pembrokeshire parishes giving evidence to the 1834 Royal Commission into the Poor Laws that while women were not punished for bearing a first illegitimate child, punishment was inflicted by most parishes on those females giving birth to additional children out of wedlock, albeit "not often", "only occasionally" and "seldom enforced".[104] In Llandewi Velfrey parish, the mother was seldom punished for a first offence of bastardy, "except her conduct has been such as to bring her under the denomination of what the law deemed a lewd woman".[105] The evidence complied by Audrey Philpin on Pembrokeshire suggests otherwise, however, for out of a sample of 29 cases of single mothers tried for bastardy

between the years 1821-1834, 17 served over three months in gaol and 9 were imprisoned for up to a year.[106]

Even without these extreme measures, it was likely that a woman would have to undergo the ordeal of being pursued from parish to parish, being thrown out by her employer, who was entitled by law to do so in such circumstances, and, if it were found that she had no legal settlement in her parents' home, being ejected from there also. Officers were quick to ascertain a future mother's place of settlement, and if it were found that she came from elsewhere, an application would soon be made for her to be removed from the parish before her confinement so as to rid local ratepayers of the financial burden .[107] Hence in 1794, overseers at Lampeter in Cardiganshire were "ordered to apply to two magistrates for the removal of Mary Jenkins to the parish of Llanwenog before her confinement and also give notice to the churchwardens and overseers of the poor of the parish of Llanwenog to keep and maintain Mary Jenkins in the said parish until her lying in, and in case of a refusal they shall be proceeded against forthwith". [108]

Until 1834, however, the bastardy laws did, to a certain extent, work in women's favour. A female finding herself pregnant had the undisputed right to name the unborn child's putative father who would then be compelled to marry her, under threat of being forced to attend a Quarter session hearing so that an affiliation order could be made against him, which, if not honoured, could result in a prison sentence of up to three months.[109] In practice, affiliation orders could be difficult, and occasionally impossible to implement, with parish officers spending a considerable amount of time, money and effort tracking down men like Evan John, who, when discovering that he was to be a father, preferred to run away from home than pay or go to prison. In his particular case, a return home was only permitted after an arrangement with an accommodating brother who negotiated with the authorities to himself pay in quarterly sums

the £1 10s. a year necessary towards the upkeep of the child.[110] When such maintainence was not forthcoming, however, single mothers were awarded outdoor relief. From a sample consisting of six Pembrokeshire parishes, and the town of Narberth, a woman could receive a weekly allowance of 1s. 6d. in support of her infant, to be paid, as in St. Issells, until the child was nine years of age. In most places, maintenance payments were deliberately kept as low as possible to ensure that women would not profit from their illegitimate births. The parish of Steynton was only prepared to allow 1s. a week, as it was thought any more would encourage women to continue in habits of idleness and prostitution in preference to going into service or earning their own living.[111] A different arrangement obtained in Narberth South, whereby the child would be taken from its mother at birth and put out to be nursed, at a similar cost to the parish, with the intention of enabling the mother to go back to work and thus be self-supporting.[112]

Even this help, however, was denied women after 1834, when, as part of the Poor Law Amendment Act, legislation was passed regarding the laws on bastardy. Based on Malthusian principles, which maintained that bastardy levels would be checked if females were made to value their own chastity, women were, in future, to be held solely responsible for their illegitimate children, both the right to outdoor relief and any payments from the father being denied them. Unmarried mothers, as a deterrent against bearing bastards, were, if in need of relief, to enter workhouses, where available, with their children and stay there until such time as they could support themselves and their offspring.[113] Not only could men no longer be threatened with imprisonment for fathering illegitimate children, but, even more damning to the mother, her word was no longer considered sufficient in naming the identity of the child's father. Instead, corroborative evidence, difficult enough to obtain given the private nature of

sexual relations, was needed as proof before any affiliation proceedings could be instigated by the parish, within three months of the birth, for hearing at the Quarter sessions. The act, then, not only curtailed an unmarried mother's financial independence, but also provided the fathers with an escape from their responsibilities. Quite simply, as Jeffrey Weeks has since remarked, the 1834 Act "diminish(ed) female control". [114]

Proving disastrous for single mothers, their plight was nowhere brought home so forcefully as in south-west Wales, where the Rebecca riots erupted in 1842-1843 partly as a protest against the hardships occasioned by the bastardy clauses of the Act. In the ensuing Royal Commission investigating the causes of the disturbance, it was argued that women were left "exposed to all the tempations of a life of vice", while the man "evades or defies the law with a confidence and effrontery which has outraged the moral feeling and provoked the indignation of the people to a degree that can be hardly described".[115] Exactly depicting their disadvantaged situation, women farm workers on a Pembrokeshire estate in 1841 explained to their employer, "Ah Sir, it is a fine time for the boys now", and "It is a bad time for the girls, Sir, the boys have it all their own way." [116] Unable to get any relief from the parish, many would attempt to compel the fathers to help them, and, when this failed, they were left with no other recourse but to go to their parents for help.[117] Even when work was available, the wages were so low that mothers could barely afford to pay for their children to go out to be nursed. Some indication of the problem is best illustrated by the plight of one "very nice woman" who had been forced to enter Haverfordwest workhouse with her illegitimate child, as she had been unable to acquire employment which would pay a sufficient amount for her to pay a child-minder the required £2 12s.[118] Those without any support whatsoever, were, if unwilling to enter the despised workhouse, reduced to perilously wandering around the countryside, relying on the charity of

others to keep themselves from starvation. Olwen Hufton's comments when describing the plight of travelling pregnant women in the eighteenth century are appropriate for similarly-placed women in Wales at a later date: "Intense misery surrounds these stories of wandering women. Each was looking for someone to 'stand her friend in her moment of misery', and local officialdom was only too ready to move her on." [119]

The activities of Rebecca reveal fascinating insight into the ambiguous feelings regarding illegitimacy and highlight the forcefulness of community action in cases of seduction and betrayal when an injustice was believed to have been perpetrated on an undeserving female. Intent upon justifying his sending a threatening letter to a man who had fathered an illegitimate child, a schoolmaster, described as a quiet man, explained, when taken before magistrates in Narberth, that "he thought it would do good; here was a poor woman starving, and here was this Mr.--, who was very well off and he ought to give something to the poor girl to help her nurse the child".[120] In a ritual manner, one young woman, the daughter of a smith living about three miles from Carmarthen, had to place her right hand on the lock of a gun belonging to members of Rebecca and swear to the identity of the father of her child, upon which, she was ordered to get in readiness to accompany the group, travelling on a cart, if necessary, to convey the child to the person in question, presumably to threaten and shame him into accepting financial responsibility for his offspring.[121] Similarly, David Parry-Jones recounts an instance whereby a few neighbours retaliated on behalf of a local cottager's young daughter, who, after having been seduced and impregnated by her employer while in his service, had come home and given birth. Armed with guns, in threatening pose, and taking the child with them, the neighbours visited the man with the intention of securing for the girl a better position from which to petition for the baby's support. [122]

Yet despite the fear of being deserted, and the hatred felt at having to enter a workhouse in order to be relieved, it appears that the power of long-established custom proved too resilient. At least in the short-term, female attitudes did not alter with regard to pre-marital sex .[123] T.P. Ellis when looking at the Dolgellau (Merioneth) parish records, for instance, noted a discernible rise in the levels of illegitimacy between 1805 and 1840 and, beyond that date, an even steeper rise.[124] A significant proportion of workhouse inmates were expectant females or those who had just given birth. The Pembroke Union workhouse, for instance, over a period of the first three years of its inception, from July 1837, reported in its returns an average of one illegitimate birth per week. [125]

David Jones, citing poor law returns on expenditure, notes that in 1843, for the Pembroke Union alone, there were at least 250 unmarried mothers and over 1,000 illegitimate children receiving relief.[126] Those most affected by the changes in the law were servant girls, who knew very little about such matters, were away from home and parental authority and willing to accept the words of their lovers who promised marriage. On becoming pregnant, they naively accepted and obeyed the words of their seducers who, to evade a marriage, craftily suggested that they enter the workhouse purely as a temporary measure, at least until the child was born, to allow time for arrangements to be made for a wedding. Once inside the workhouse, they were betrayed and abandoned, all previous promises conveniently forgotten.[127]

Not surprisingly, as many men took advantage of the leniency in the laws to escape marriage and fatherhood, the years after 1834 saw a great deal of time given over at Quarter and later Petty Sessions to hearing affiliation cases. Bastardy cases thus dominated the 1835 April Quarter Sessions in Carmarthenshire, and, likewise, at the two-day Pembrokeshire Quarter Session in October 1835, the first was almost entirely taken up with making affiliation orders.[128]

Despite the pre-occupation of the courts in dealing with affiliation cases, many women, however, did not receive any awards. In the years following 1834, scores of paternity cases were thrown out for being "out of time", "without supportive evidence" and a variety of other reasons.[129] Many cases of illegitimacy did not even reach this stage. Barry Reay, when comparing the number of examinations of unmarried mothers in the petty session records for two parishes in rural Kent, found that of the 46 illegitimate births that occurred for the period 1860 to 1871, only 7, or 15 per cent, appeared in the claims.[130]

Affiliating a child was not an easy or straightforward task for women, especially after an amendment in the law in 1844 making them responsible for initiating their own actions, for not only was there the cost of the action (a summons, alone, cost 2s.) but possible adjournments in addition. Always there was the prospect of a harrowing court appearance, for when affiliation hearings did come before the bench in south-west Wales, individual cases could take up to five or six hours before a judgement could be given.[131] The affiliation case brought by Martha Jones of Llanon, for instance, was not unusual in its occupying the court for six hours and involving fourteen witnesses in total between the two opposing parties.[132] For even as a mother would desperately seek to affiliate her child in order to gain some measure of financial aid so, too, would the putative father be equally as desperate to wriggle out of his responsibilities by either failing to turn up in court and running away, the industrialising areas of Glamorganshire being a favoured place, or, when actually attending, using every means possible to set up a convincing defence which could sway the magistrates in his favour. So popular was perjury as a defence mechanism, that magistrates at Llanelli Petty Sessions were driven to comment that, as the practice was carried on to such a bare-faced extent in such cases, they were determined to put a stop to it. [133] Defendants pleaded their innocence and acted vehemently in their determination

not to admit to any culpability in fathering a child. Post-boy, John Lewis, swore at Aberaeron Petty Sessions, Cardiganshire, that he would rather be cut up, boiled and fed to the local pack of foxhounds than be adjudged a father.[134] Others came before the bench swearing and drunk. William Roberts, for one, came into court so intoxicated that the case had to be adjourned and he had to be escorted outside. When attending court the following Saturday, magistrates took a dim view of his behaviour, and he was subsequently fined 5s.and costs, in default of which, he was to be confined in the stocks in the parish of St. Mary at Haverfordwest for six hours.[135] Thomas Phillips, a married man, for his part appeared to take his affiliation proceedings as a huge joke, becoming especially uproarious when the court heard that the complainant Margaret Davies had already had five children. He was not so pleased later, however, when ordered to pay 1s. 6d. per week towards his child's upkeep. [136]

It is not surprising that outside as well as inside the courts, paternity cases could and did arouse feelings of anger and moral outrage towards both those directly involved and also their families and friends, especially as there was a great likelihood that all parties lived near each other, or at least knew each other. On the one hand, pressure might be imposed on a reluctant father by the child's mother and family to accept responsibility and give support, as in the case of feisty widow Mary Thomas of Lammas Street, Carmarthen, who, aided by her son, took the law into her own hands and attacked her lover for ignoring her application for support for her new child, and, again, that of Jane Bowen, a 22-year-old farm servant, who in desperation wrote letters threatening to set fire to the hay straw and animals housed in the farm buildings of her employer's son if he did not agree to an affiliation order.[137] Conversely, women were subjected to harassment and physical intimidation by former lovers whom they had summonsed to appear in court on affiliation orders. Elizabeth Evans was thus attacked by a man as she proceeded to

Cardigan to affiliate her child to his brother, and a pregnant girl living in Anglesey was subjected to what was described by the *Carmarthen Journal* as an atrocious attack designed to cause her to miscarry, perpetrated by her lover and his two nephews whom she had arranged to meet in order to discuss the calling of the wedding banns. Hit and kicked until she became senseless, she nevertheless accepted a few shillings to settle the affair rather than face her attackers in court with what would only be judged as a common assault. [138]

Likewise, females who took out affiliations against married lovers were likely to receive the full wrath of their wives, as did Ann Daniel, who was struck in the face until "the blood flowed" by the reputed father's spouse.[139] Just as bitter was the resentment felt at actually having to pay maintenance when affiliation orders had been found. This grievance aroused the high feelings of Margaret Lewis' former lover, James Fontaine, junior, who, not long after paying the latest instalment of maintenance to her towards the upkeep of their child, subjected her to a tirade of verbal abuse, which included calling her a common whore and making remarks intimating that she clothed herself out of her earnings from prostitution. Hurt by his remarks, she rebuked him for going with other women instead of caring for their child, whereupon he blackened her eye and had to be physically restrained from continuing to abuse her. [140]

Although it has been argued that affiliation hearings, unlike the cases of sexual assault, did not take the character of the woman into consideration, for magistrates were likely to take the woman's side against the man's, presumably with an eye to reducing the burden of keeping the child on the parish rates, the evidence for south-west Wales, however, suggests that this was not entirely true, as a woman's respectability to some extent determined how much, and even whether, she was to be awarded.[141] Although a set sum was allowed, for instance an order of 1s. 6d. per week plus a payment of 10s. to the midwife was the settlement decided at

Carmarthenshire Quarter Sessions in 1835, in practice magistrates used their discretionary powers to award varying amounts depending, amongst other considerations, on the past behaviour of the mother, the number of illegitimate children she already had, her age and the defendant's standing in society. In an affiliation hearing at Newcastle Emlyn (Carmarthenshire) petty sessions, an order was given for 3d. only, as it was considered that "the young lady had not been very particular in taking care of herself", whilst it was not unknown for a woman to be refused maintenance if she was thought to have morals of the lowest description or had already given birth to a number of other illegitimate children, even if the case was proved in her favour.[142] The Revd. W. Miles refused to attend two affiliation hearings as a defendant, but rather than this be considered an admission of his guilt when the case was heard in his absence, and despite sound evidence being given proving his intimacy with the child's mother and their five-to six- year engagement, the fact that she had seen with other men was enough for the application to be dismissed.[143] Although pre-marital sex was accepted as part of courtship, if a girl's chastity was proven to be questionable this could be used as a justifiable reason for breaking an arrangement to marry. When Sarah Jenkins was jilted by her lover, John Edwards, she took out an action against him for breach of promise heard at Cardigan Great Sessions in the Spring of 1826. Although the case was proven, for it was ascertained that he had intended to marry her, having purchased the ring and arranged a marriage licence, the damages imposed extended to only forty shillings, as the court was told he had broken off the wedding as a result of hearing rumours about his intended wife's chastity. [144]

Again, if it was found that the reputed father was younger than the mother, then the latter would be considered the more culpable of the two, and this could affect any allowances awarded. Thus in 1854 twenty-five-year-old Hannah Garnett was awarded the reduced sum of one shilling

a week as she was considered the more guilty party, the child's father being only twenty years of age. [145] Age-old beliefs that females used their sexuality to snare, or entrap, a husband were strongly felt, and no doubt in some instances this was indeed the case.

An indication of the number of affiliation orders awarded and the varying amounts to be paid can be illustrated in the figures for the County of Carmarthen for 1849. Out of the 101 cases heard, the following verdicts and amounts were decided upon:

Cases awarded at 2s.	5
Cases awarded at 1s. 9d.	45
Cases awarded at 1s. 6d.	25
Cases awarded at 1s. 3d.	4
Cases awarded but no amount specified	8
Cases dismissed / no order made	9
Cases withdrawn / not found / abandoned	5
TOTAL	101 [146]

Even when they were successful in their affiliation proceedings, not a few single mothers found that actually taking possession of what was due to them was nigh impossible, for some truculent fathers, unwilling to accept the court's findings, continued to refuse to contribute anything towards their child's upkeep. In some hopeless cases, like that of David Thomas, a Llandysul weaver who owed three years' maintenance, arrears would be wiped clean and a new amount of affordable weekly payments set.[147] Some men, however, even refused to agree to

this, preferring to go to gaol than pay a penny. In the event of a distress order placed by the court still finding the father to be in default of funds, the man could then be sent to prison for a period of between one and three months.[148] When the law caught up with John Jones of Little Lovestone, Pembrokeshire, for not having paid a penny towards the support of his six-year-old son, he was repeatedly locked up in gaol for months at a time, until, acquiescing, he asked his friends to pay for him.[149] Unfortunately, of course, punishing errant fathers by imposing gaol sentences on them did little to help an impoverished mother struggling to raise her child.[150] In these cases, her only recourse was to continue petitioning the courts in the hope of eventually obtaining even a fraction of what she was due. It is hard to imagine the frustration experienced by the mother of Isaac Stephen's child as she waited while twenty summonses were served against the child's father in his absence, and who, when finally apprehended, served a total of eighteen months in gaol in stretches of three months each. No wonder that she compromised by settling for £12 as arrears, a sum which would hardly meet the considerable expenses she had incurred in bringing summonses against him.[151]

In the event of being unable to secure any financial support through the affiliation procedure, and without the support of parents or perhaps a partner, it is not surprising that some mothers, out of sheer desperation, deserted their children, hoping that by freeing themselves their fortunes would improve. Commentators unanimously agreed that crimes of child-dropping and desertion had increased so dramatically after 1834 in south-west Wales, that, by mid-century, they constituted a serious problem for the authorities. Such was the frustration, in 1850, of the Haverfordwest Board of Guardians that they offered a reward of two guineas for information which would result in the conviction of perpetrators of this "inhuman and unfeeling custom". [152] Newspapers reported numerous instances of infants and small children being left

at workhouse gates, on doorsteps, in barns and places where, presumably, they had a good chance of being found unharmed. [153] The condition of some of the abandoned children bears testimony to the poverty-ridden circumstances surrounding their existence. A female infant found at the door of the Llanelli union workhouse was thus described as being severely emaciated, poorly-clad and verminous.[154] Others, however, showed signs of having been well looked after, though one wonders at the sacrifices made by a poor mother in being able to achieve this. One five-months-old baby left on the doorstep of an earthenware dealer in Haverfordwest was discovered wrapped in a petticoat. On his head was a lilac hood, and, together with some pairs of white socks and calico shirts, was placed alongside him a pair of leather boots which had been slit open to make them larger.[155] As with this child, who was thought to have been brought to the town from the direction of Fishguard or Cardigan, many of the babies abandoned in towns were the offspring of country girls, hoping, perhaps, to remain unrecognised while leaving their charges in the vicinity of a workhouse where they would be taken in. Always a tell-tale sign were the layers of travel stains and dust which enveloped the infants.

Sources of considerable annoyance to the Poor Law authorities were the pauper mothers who found their way around the law to further their own purposes. Long-term residents of Carmarthen workhouse, Jane Cambell, who absconded without her three illegitimate children, leaving them in the authorities' care for five months, and Mary Ann Banner, who frequently dumped her children at the workhouse, only to be later re-united with them, are only two examples of women playing the system to gain some measure of freedom for themselves.[156] This method of ridding themselves of their illegitimate children caused great irritation to the

clerk of the Pembroke Union, Jonathon Jones, who wrote to the Poor Law Commissioners in June 1841, asking for advice, thus:

> Gentlemen, the following evil is becoming prevalent in this union. A single woman avails herself of the relief of the workhouse for sometime before and after her confinement on a bastard child. She then contrives to escape, leaving her child in the House. The Board invariably gives orders that she may be apprehended and brought before the Justices to be dealt with according to the law – the Justices commit her for one month to the House of Correction, without her Infant at the end of which time, the Infant is weaned, the mother is liberated and nothing more is heard of her. What remedy can be adopted? [157]

Public attitudes towards those women guilty of these child-related crimes remained ambiguous, for while a great deal of sympathy lay with females who found themselves the victims of a law which encouraged inequality by placing the burden of an illegitimate child on the shoulders of a mother while exonerating the father, they were, nevertheless, seen as "heartless", "unnatural" and "guilty of depraved conduct", and, as such, became the recipients of much self-righteous condemnation for abandoning their offspring.[158] Women were held totally responsible for the care of their illegitimate children, and, even if they abandoned the child at the home of the father, all censure was placed on the mothers.[159] When taken to court, magistrates imposed sentences ranging from strict cautions to weeks or months in gaol, the severity of the sentence depending on the circumstances within which the child was found. If, for instance, it was thought that the mother had deliberately left the child in an isolated place hoping for it to perish, then she would be sent to attend the Assizes to answer more serious

charges, with correspondingly severe punishments if found guilty.[160] So prevalent had child-dropping become by the 1860s that the chairman of the bench at the Pembrokeshire Quarter Sessions in 1868 was driven to issue a warning that magistrates were, in future, determined to inflict the highest amount of punishment they could on miscreants, that is three months' imprisonment with hard labour.[161]

For some women, however, even the prospect of single motherhood was too daunting to contemplate. Added to the insurmountable hardships likely to be endured when bringing up a child single-handedly was the social stigma, alluded to earlier, of bearing a child outside marriage, a situation which would have been exacerbated by the ignominy of the workhouse and the unpleasantness associated with seeking maintenance payments. For the desperate, abortion and infanticide appeared a means of escape. Popular remedies for stopping a pregnancy would have been handed down over the generations and included the use of herbs and natural ingredients such as penny royal and bitter apples, while the abortive qualities of iron were not unknown to many.[162] And as early as 1808, newspapers in Wales were openly carrying advertisements for abortificants such as Dr. Bath of Bristol's Restorative pills, reputedly the remedy for all diseases that originated in the abdominal region. Available in Carmarthen, Haverfordwest and most other towns in the Principality, and acting as a gentle diuretic, the pills were particularly directed at women for whom they were considered "invaluable".[163]

Given the secrecy surrounding abortion, in view of its illegality and the doubtful efficacy of some of the abortificants used, it is difficult to ascertain how widespread the practice was, for only those cases involving serious illness and fatalities came to light. The evidence which is available, from police report books, coroners' inquests and publicised court cases involving those who encouraged the use of abortificants, corresponds to that of other studies on the subject in

pointing to the fact that pregnant women were likely to seek the help of older females, either friends or neighbours, for advice on how to stop a pregnancy.[164] Pregnant farm servant Margaret Harries, of the parish of Boulston, Pembrokeshire, in 1859 sought the help of a friend on a neighbouring farm. By confiding that she herself had used drugs to abort a baby, the neighbour armed the girl with knowledge that was ultimately to lead to her death, for, embarking on a disastrous course of action, Margaret hastened to Haverfordwest, where, borrowing sixpence from another woman, she purchased some medicine, later analysed as tartar Ametic, which had been recommended and sold to her as an abortificant by one of the druggists in the town. [165] Like Sarah Evans, a servant in husbandry in the parish of Talley, Carmarthenshire, who also died after taking poison in the desperate hope of aborting, Margaret would have probably been interred at midnight without the benefit of a Christian burial, for females who self-administered abortificants were treated as those who had committed suicide.[166]

More tragic, perhaps, were those girls who found themselves the reluctant recipients of abortifacants administered by lovers who, unwilling to accept the responsibilities of incipient fatherhood , sought the means to disencumber themselves. One of the few people to be hanged in nineteenth-century Wales was twenty-year-old Rees Thomas Rees, found guilty of causing the death of Elizabeth Jones, his sweetheart of two years, by administering arsenic as an abortificant in the hope of keeping her pregnancy secret. The Presbyterian lay preacher and farmer from Llangadog in Carmarthenshire, having bought the poison off a doctor at the Llandeilo May Fair, forcefully persuaded the girl to take it, suggesting to her that it was for purging the blood. Suffering in agony, she expired eight days later, but not before cautioning her younger sister to beware "the work of men". [167]

Infanticide, the extreme alternative to abortion, was less easy to hide, although, as in other crimes of a sexual nature, its incidence proves difficult to quantify. That child murder was prevalent, and increasing, in the early nineteenth century, prompted press reports of a "truly alarming" situation, and, later, in the 1840's, contemporaries believed the harsh clauses of the poor law reform were instrumental in increasing the incidence of infanticide, although here opinion was divided.[168] Certainly the cases brought to court accounted for only a fraction of actual occurrences, for newspapers of the time frequently reported the finding of babies' remains, in various states of decomposition, hidden in such obscure locations as rabbit-holes, ashpits, or in rivers and ponds.[169] Some locations appeared favoured spots for disposing of unwanted offspring. The vestry minutes in one north Wales parish recorded the following item of expenditure: "Account of costs of a search of all pools in a place in the parish of Ruthin for bodies of children supposed to have been thrown there."[170] Most grizzly of all were the accounts of babies' mutilated corpses being found in pig-styes or, as in July 1834, in the kennels of Begelly House in Pembrokeshire, where the half-eaten body of a new-born baby was discovered.[171] Few explanations have been given as to how these babies came to be dumped, but Elizabeth Vaughan's defence, after abandoning her four-day-old baby on Trefgarn mountain in Pembrokeshire to die of exposure, that she "had no choice", would be the likely cause. [172]

Concealing a pregnancy was, nevertheless, not an easy matter in watchful Welsh communities. Even those who sought to reside elsewhere near to their confinement found their secret hard to conceal, for people everywhwere were alert and watchful for any hint of aberrant behaviour in their midst. Gamekeeper's daughter eighteen-year-old Elizabeth Evans left her home to lodge in Carmarthen in order to give birth secretly, but her new neighbours in Chapel Street were quick not only to discover her condition but to find the body of her baby boy which

she had hidden in the outside cesspit used for keeping the nightsoil.[173] Mark Jackson, writing on new-born baby murder in eighteenth-century England, argues that much of the initial detective work on females suspected of murdering their infants would be carried out by the local community, neighbours and relatives, whose reasons for doing so included anger at being deceived over the concealing of a pregnancy, anxiety over perceived morally-threatening behaviour of unattached women and concern over additional financial burdens to the parish.[174] This also holds true for south-west Wales. When suspicions were aroused that infanticide had been committed, rumours swifty reached the ears of the authorities. Prying neighbours at Llanelli, suspecting Hannah Thomas who lived with her parents of having been confined, contacted the police by way of an anonymous letter, after a friend of the family, a local farmer, had taxed the girl and her mother about the location of the baby and was told to mind his own business. The body of a baby was subsequently found with marks of a finger and thumb on its throat.[175] Sceptical as to widow Anne Lewis' word that she was not pregnant, a close neighbour, Samuel Taylor, instructed his servant girl to watch closely for any signs of a birth. When it was thought her confinement was near, his wife further instructed the girl to sleep with the widow to supervise her every move, a ploy which worked as she found blood on the hearthstone and in the bottom of an earthenware pot. Subsequent to these findings, the tailor and a constable located the body of the new-born child hastily hidden under a pillow supporting Anne's head.[176]

When a chapel member was suspected of having given birth in secret, female members of the chapel experienced in childbearing, were, in some cases, expected to establish the truth by visiting the offending girl and, if necessary, subjecting her to a physical examination. Hannah Davies, a widow and several other female members of Capel Horeb, in Llanllawddog, Carmarthenshire, were berated by their chapel elders - men who placed chastity before charity -

for not having seen Anne Abel, a maid in service, whom they thought had recently given birth. On the appointed visit, although the women were refused permission to examine her breasts for signs of milk, they noticed that she was smaller in size than in the recent past. They duly reported their findings, upon which a parish official, after taking the advice of a landlord, sought a warrant from a Carmarthen magistrate to summons the girl for destroying her new-born child.[177] Other ploys adopted to elicit the truth included using the closeness between couples to extract a confession, the lover's evidence then being used later as testimony against her.[178]

Those experiencing the greatest difficulties in concealing a pregnancy and a birth, and hence the most likely to attend court to answer charges of infanticide, were live-in servants, the occupational category anyway the most vulnerable to seduction and illegitimacy. If lack of privacy, long hours of supervised work with few breaks, and the intimacy of multi-occupancy beds presented complication enough in hiding a pregnancy from an employer's family (some avoided suspicion by loosening clothing and complaining of the weight-gaining condition, dropsy), hiding the messy and all-too-evident business of childbirth was virtually impossible to achieve, as was disposal of a body afterwards. Servants hid their dead babies behind bolsters, in coffers, drawers and underneath clothes, presumably in the hope of later permanently disposing of the bodies.[179] Elizabeth Rees' pregnant condition had, for months, been the subject of rumour in the neighbourhood of Llanddeusant, Carmarthenshire, in which parish she worked as a maidservant, but her employer, a widow, had no doubts the girl was expecting a child for she had touched her swollen abdomen when she was sleeping, as had the widow's son when riding pillion with her on horseback. Although repeatedly denying her pregnancy, Elizabeth's plight was finally uncovered when, having been sent to fetch a farmer for an unwell cow, she was discovered acting suspiciously in a patch of woodland by her employer's thirteen-year-old

grandaughter who thought that she had heard, at the same time, a baby's cry. Despite excusing herself on her return, with the pretence that she had been releasing a sheep from thorns, a subsequent search by the family and neighbours called in as witnesses, revealed that the girl had in fact given birth to a girl on the nearby riverbank and had attempted to hide the body in adjacent woodland, having dragged a stone up from the river as cover.[180]

When detected, little sympathy would have been given. When Margaret Francis, a servant to the Lewis family at St. Ishmael, Carmarthenshire, was located in the family's privy where she had just delivered a baby, far from being pitied, she instead became open to abuse. "Deny now you are not pregnant", said her mistress, while the smug daughter of the house exclaimed: " My dear Mother she has lost it for look how sleek she is." [181]

Whilst every effort was made to detect suspected infanticides, inquest hearings, wherever possible, avoided issuing verdicts of wilful murder, and when cases did eventually get heard in the legal courts, few prosecutions resulted in convictions.[182] Under an Act dating from 1623, infanticide was punishable with the death penalty, but, from 1803, a woman could be tried, instead, under the lesser crime of concealment of birth, a crime, if proven, carrying a maximum penalty of two years' imprisonment.[183] In court, when there was any doubt at all, or where the evidence was not such to firmly convict the accused, the presiding judge would direct the Grand Jury to acquit. In the summing up of Maria Banner's trial for the wilful murder of her ten-day-old baby, although the evidence showed that the child's death was due to suffocation, the judge advised the jury to acquit her if there was any reasonable doubt that she had intended to commit murder. After only a ten-minute absence, Maria was found not guilty.[184] Mary Williams was given a sentence of nine months' imprisonment for concealment of birth, despite the fact that a handkerchief had been wound around the neck of the child twice and the cause of death was

attributed to suffocation.[185] Juries readily accepted the excuses given by mothers for having delivered dead babies, that they had fallen when pregnant, had been injured by animals, or had strained themselves carrying heavy loads, while others attributed the bruises and cuts on their babies to accidents at the time of delivery.[186] Even medical evidence which proved that a baby had been alive at birth was no guarantee of a guilty verdict, for, as the presiding judge, Mr. Baron Peake, at Carmarthenshire Assizes, in July 1850, was at pains to stress to his Grand Jury, in order for them to find a case of wilful murder it was necessary for them to be satisfied that the child had lived a separate existence from its mother, and not merely breathed.[187] Directives of this kind, issued by presiding judges, appear eagerly pursued by court juries, both at petty and grand levels. Richard Ireland, in his study of child murder and the law in Carmarthenshire in the thirty-year period between 1845-1875, found juries' verdicts leaning heavily towards leniency, and, notwithstanding the reluctance of Welsh juries to convict *in* murder cases, the *situation* was similar for the lesser charge of concealment, and reflected in the length of sentence awarded someone found guilty.[188] Statistics taken from the Criminal Registers for the twenty-seven years between 1805-1832 for Cardiganshire, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire, concur with his findings, although the figures would appear to indicate a high proportion of convictions for concealment of birth. Of the 11 cases where women were charged with murder (we can safely assume that a significant number would have been infanticide, although this is not specified), seven were pronounced not guilty, one was not prosecuted and two were ruled "no bills". Of the fourteen concealments, only two were acquitted, but of those convicted only two were given maximum sentences, the remainder serving from fourteen days up to eighteen months. [189] This pattern of high acquittals and light punishments sits at odds, however, with the assiduous detection work characterising community behaviour towards suspected infanticides which was so

instrumental in bringing prosecutions to court. That the Welsh rural community's strong tradition of regulating morality, using exposure and shame as a major component of punishment, was preferred to, or perhaps considered more appropriate than, a criminal judgement from an outside formal legal system, has considerable credence and provides a convincing explanation.[190]

Also pertinent was the tacit recognition that it was not only the woman who was culpable. When Margaret Hugh was acquitted of murdering her two illegitimate children at Carmarthenshire Spring Assizes, she was acquitted by the jury, who defended their decision by blaming the New Poor Law with all its implications for women.[191] Certainly the judge presiding over a concealment of birth case involving twenty-year-old Martha Evans at the 1859 Pembrokeshire Spring Assizes displayed some degree of deeper understanding and empathy. Sentencing her to three months' imprisonment, the judge was driven to remark, "I wish I had it in my power to pass sentence upon the man who brought you into the condition that led to the commission of this offence. I think he is quite as guilty, if not more guilty than you are; nevertheless, you are guilty of violating the law of chastity, law of God and man." [192] In matters of sexuality, as always, the burden of proof lay, unjustly, heavily with the woman.

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1 Vaughan, *Welsh Proverbs with English Translations*, no. 2390, p.350.

2 K.Thomas, "The Double Standard", *The Journal of the History of Ideas*, XX, 2 (1959), p.195. Prof. Thomas accounts for the double standard as stemming from the perception that women are held by men, whether father or husband, and that pre-marital or extra-marital sexual relations substantially reduces their value as property.

3 Frank McLynn, *Crime and punishment in eighteenth century England* (London, 1989), p.102.

4 N.L.W. MS. 1756B : Walter Davies, Journals of Tours in Wales, 28 May 1813.

5 P.P., 1847, XXV11, *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, p.421.

6 P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.115.

7 Bundling was not peculiar to Wales but was known as a traditional courting custom elsewhere in Europe; for an explanation of the tradition of bundling and the countries where the custom was known, see P.P.,1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, pp.643-4.

8 Rees, *Life in a Welsh Countryside*, p.86; P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.52.

9 N.L.W. MS. 1756B: Walter Davies, Journals of Tours in Wales, 28 May 1813.

[10] The custom of bundling was viewed by its critics as being rather a means for illicit sexual activity to occur than a natural progression towards serious courtship. See P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.43; a full account of the campaign against bundling is given in Stevens, *Welsh courting customs*, pp.97-113.

[11] P.P., 1847, XXV11, *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, p.57. For an analysis of the language used in the report with reference to the immorality of the Welsh and in particular its womenfolk, see Gwyneth Tyson Roberts, *The language of the Blue Books: the perfect instrument of empire* (Cardiff, 1998), pp.163-167.

[12] A spirited defence to the accusations can be found in Evan Jones, *Facts, Figures and Statements in illustration of the Dissent and Morality of Wales: An Appeal to the English People* (London,1849), p.31.

[13] *C.J.*, 17 May 1850.

[14] Stevens, *Welsh courting customs*, pp.105-107.

[15] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in Agriculture*, p.101.

[16] In some districts down to the twentieth century farmers were reluctant to act against bundling for the same reason, see P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.128.

[17] P.P., 1893-94, XXXVI, *The Agricultural Labourer*, p.63.

[18] *C.J.*, 25 September 1863 and 18 September 1868.

[19] Ibid.

[20] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, pp.53,101.

[21] Ibid., p 102.

[22] P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, pp.643- 645. It was felt that further improvement could be effected by the provision of proper accommodation for male farm servants, such as an out-house kitchen with a fire where they could spend their evenings in comfort, reading and writing.

[23] P.P., 1847, XXV11, *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*, pp.21,486.

[24] Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, p.37.

[25] *C.J.*, 8 September 1848.

[26] *C.J.*, 21 November 1862; 23 January 1857.

[27] *C.J.*, 22 November 1861.

[28] Ursula Vogel, "'Whose Property?': The Double Standard of Adultery in Nineteenth Century Law", in Carol Smart, (ed.), *Regulating Womanhood: Historical Essays on Marriage , Motherhood and Sexuality* (London, 1992), pp.160-163.

[29] Wirt Sikes, *Rambles and Studies in Old South Wales*, pp.233-234. Such was the power of community disapproval and censore of adulterous behaviour that it was not unheard of for married women caught in compromising situations to instigate charges of indecent assault on their erstwhile lovers, even if, by doing so, they risked public ridicule. In order to save her reputation in the neighbourhood after having been caught with her lover, Mary Edwards, a Llangeitho shopkeeper's wife, accused the man with having assaulted her, a charge which led to an appearance at Tregaron Petty Sessions, where magistrates heard that the man had regularly visited her at home and on each occasion had presented her with a "compliment" of a bottle of wine or a sum of money (2s.6d.) for her favours, *C.J.*, 27 November 1863.

[30] *Cambrian*, 14 September 1849.

[31] *Welshman*, 6 April 1638.

[32] Strong feelings of anger and retaliation aroused over sexual slurs led to violence, fighting and court appearances, see the *Welshman*, 14 March 1834; *C.J.*, 28 March 1862.

[33] Walter T. Morgan, "The Consistory Courts of the Diocese of St. David's, 1660-1858: studies of the records of the courts illustrative of their work and practices" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Wales, 1962), for a detailed account of the function, procedure and cases heard in the Consistory courts in south-west Wales.

[34] In contrast to women, men were more likely to bring cases when their honour had been questioned in relation to their honesty and integrity in business dealings. Only in a very small number of isolated cases

were men maligned for their sexual conduct and those who were, usually held a public office which made them vulnerable to allegations of immorality. The Revd. Berrington was one who, as Rector of Oxwich, Gower, successfully defended his name against rumours that he had kept a mistress during his stay in Swansea and Tregaron. N.L.W., SD/CCCm (G) 557.

[35] Laura Gowing, "Gender and the language of insult in early modern London", *History Workshop Journal*, 35 (1993), p.19. Historians examining defamation cases in Consistory court papers for other Dioceses have also found that women constituted the majority of those lodging suits; see also J.A. Sharpe, *Defamation and Sexual Slander in early modern England: The church courts at York* (York, 1980); Polly Morris, "Defamation and sexual reputation in Somerset, 1733-1850" (University of Warwick Ph.D. thesis, 1985).

[36] In the case of spinster Mary Evans, who lodged a suit against Margaret, the wife of Rice Jones, a mason, in June 1826, it was not resolved until 1828, costs amounting to £26 10s 5d, SD/CCC m (G) 511. At £64 12s. 6 d., the costs in Elizabeth Harries' defamation suit against farmer, George Drew, the judgement for which was given in 1829, were even higher, N.L.W., SD/CCC m (G) 512.

[37] N.L.W., SD/CCC m (G) 527.

[38] N.L.W., SD/CCC m (G) 535.

[39] N.L.W., SD/CCC m (G) 579.

[40] N.L.W., SD/CCC m (G) 537.

[41] See Eric Trudgill, *Madonnas and Magdalens: the origins and development of Victorian sexual attitudes* (London, 1976).

[42] Thomas, *The diaries of John Bird 1790-1803*, entry for 20 April 1801, p.131; *C.J.*, 10 March 1865.

[43] Gibson, *Agriculture in Wales*, p.49.

[44] P.P., 1847, XXV11, *Reports of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the state of Education in Wales*, p.77.

[45] Vernon Scott, "Pembrokeshire Soldiery", in David W. Howell, (ed.), *Pembrokeshire County History*, vol. iv, *Modern Pembrokeshire*, pp.346-7; *Reports from Committees, Contagious Diseases Acts*, Vol (3) , Vol 1X, February- December 1882, pp. xxix, cited in Davies, *Secret Sins*, pp.297-8.

[46] Malkin, *The Scenery, Antiquities and Biography of South Wales*, p.432.

[47] *Welshman*, 24 February 1932.

[48] *C.J.*, 7 March 1851; comparable police figures for London give the total number of prostitutes as 9,500, but this is thought to be far lower than the actual level. Nevertheless, even with under-estimation these numbers hardly compare with Superintendant Kentish's calculations on Carmarthen; Michael Mason, *The making of Victorian sexuality: sexual behaviour and its understanding* (Oxford, 1994), pp.79-80.

[49] *C.J.*, 15 July 1859; the streets bordering the quay in Carmarthen hosted a number of disreputable houses and inns where sex could be bought cheaply. One well-known mid-nineteenth-century brothel housing a number of prostitutes belonged to a Mary Howell, *C.J.*, 20 March 1863.

[50] Correspondance from a Freeholder of Carmarthen to the *Welshman* newspaper regarding the Poor Law Amendment Act, *Welshman*, 17 July 1837.

[51] P.P., 1836, XX1X, *2nd Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*: Mr Clive's Report on the Carmarthen Union, p.399.

[52] *C.J.*, 8 December 1854.

[53] Denning, *The Diary of William Thomas, 1762 - 1795*, p.14.

[54] *C.J.*, 12 November 1852; 7 March 1851.

[55] D.J.V. Jones, "The Welsh and Crime", in C. Emsley and J.Walvin, (eds.), *Artisans, Peasants and Proletariat 1760-1860* (London, 1985), p.84. Efforts to "solve" the problems of prostitution were confined to a few towns in Wales. The first House of Mercy for south Wales and Monmouthshire was established in Llandaff, Glamorganshire in 1863. The Bishop of Llandaff was appointed chairman of the committee to oversee its efficient running. The institution was designed to hold twenty-two "penitents"

who were to be employed in washing, laundry and needlework on a commercial basis, *C.J.*, 16 October 1863.

[56] *C.J.*, 28 August 1863; for some of the incidents where she was brought before the magistrates, see Pat Molloy, *A shilling for Carmarthen: the town they nearly tamed* (Llandysul, 1980), pp.98-100.

[57] *C.J.*, 22 August 1862; Ann's unruliness and bad behaviour whilst in prison instigated a series of punishments including being placed in irons and solitary confinement. Ann suffered from fits, but, like other inmates, neither her illhealth nor the reasons for her bad behaviour were ever investigated. See E. Vernon Jones, "Twelve months in a Victorian Gaol",*The Carmarthenshire Historian*, XV111 (1981), pp.44-46; R.W. Ireland, "Eugene Buckley and The Diagnosis of Insanity in the Early Victorian Prison", *Llafur*, 6, 2 (1993), p.14.

[58] *Cambrian*, 21 May 1808.

[59] *Cambrian*, 9 May 1829.

[60] *C.J.*, 11 April 1845; sexual encounters of this very disturbing nature, occurring as women and girls returned from chapel and prayer meetings, gave a new reading to the slur against females as propounded by the commissioners writing in the 1847 Education Report.

[61] One young servant girl was sexually assaulted by a ferryman while crossing the Cleddau from Milford to Hubberston after fetching medicine for her mistress. Sobbing bitterly she later related how the man had pulled up her skirts and offered cash inducements for her compliance; see P.R.O. PQ/Misc. 85, Midsummer 1835; see also *C.J.*, 16 January 1846 for another account of a sexual attack, this time on a female letter carrier working between New Quay and Aberaeron.

[62] *C.J.*, 12 July 1867, 26 July 1867 and 25 October 1867. See also *C.J.*, 20 August 1852, for a case involving a gang of six labourers who raped nineteen-year-old Anne Mathias in a hayfield near Hubbardston, near Pembroke.

[63] *C.J.* 10 March 1854, 16 August 1861.

[64] Jill Barber, " 'Stolen Goods': the sexual harassment of female servants in west Wales during the nineteenth century" , *Rural History*, 4, 2 (1993), pp.124-125. Referring to Merioneth, David Jones writes that victims of rape were often female servants trapped in outbuildings and lonely places, see Jones, *Crime in nineteenth-century Wales*, p.79.

[65] *C.J.*, 8 February 1867.

[66] *C.J.*, 29 May 1863 and 10 July 1863; see also *C.J.*, 5 November 1847, 12 November 1847.

[67] Despite the worries about overcrowding in homes and incestuous unions, it was not until 1908 that legislation was passed making incest a crime. The reluctance of legislators to address incest has been attributed, in part, to Victorian beliefs in the sanctity of the home and the need to guard the privacy of family life; Anthony Wohl, *The Victorian Family: structures and stresses* (London, 1978), pp.200-202.

[68] N.L.W., C.G.S. 4/745/1/64; see also *C.J.*, 9 June 1865 for an incident involving a collier living in Llanelli.

[69] If the contents of police occurrence books in the counties of south-west Wales were similar to those in Merioneth, and it is likely that they were, then far more sexual abuse occurred than their court records volunteer; Jones, *Crime in nineteenth-century Wales*, p.79. Emsley, when examining crime in England between 1750-1900, argues that sexual assaults were always notoriously under-reported; Clive Emsley, *Crime and society in England 1750-1900* (London, 1987), p.24.

[70] *C.J.*, 28 October 1864.

[71] Samuel Jones, for instance, left court delighted that he had reached a compromise with the father of the girl he had three weeks previously indecently assaulted in a field, *C.J.*, 29 September 1865. Rather than resort to the courts and risk bad feelings with neighbours, many individuals preferred to settle wrongs privately, see Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, p.158.

[72] See *C.J.*, 4 Febraury 1853 and 25 November 1864 for accounts of the two cases.

[73] Anna Clark, *Women's silence, Men's violence: sexual assault in England, 1770-1845* (London, 1987), pp.49-50. Accounting for this, she refers to the continuing misogynistic elements within the charivari

tradition. Emsley argues that in Bedfordshire there was a reluctance to prosecute by victims and their families due to public opinion which felt that rape accusations and charges were made too freely, see Emsley, *Crime and society in England 1750-1900*, p.138.

[74] David W. Howell, "The Rebecca Riots", in T. Herbert and Gareth E. Jones, (eds.), *People and Protest* (Cardiff, 1987), pp.118-119. Whilst there appeared little public reaction for rapes involving adult women, sexual assaults on young girls, at least at a community level, could be met with strong disapproval with threats of reprisals. In Breconshire, a gentleman, David Jones, was found guilty of raping a six-year-old girl during the autumn of 1791. It is surely no mere coincidence that in the preceding August he had accused three farmers of his parish of having threatened to draw and quarter him and drag him into the river, Howell, *The Rural Poor in eighteenth-century Wales*, p.224.

[75] For an indepth account of the processes of the law, the protocol of the courts and subsequent newspaper reporting, see D' Cruze, *Crimes of outrage, sex, violence and Victorian working women*, chapters 7 and 8.

[76] *C.J.*, 15 August 1896.

[77] Coercing and bullying jury members was especially apparent in cases of sexual assault. In one notable case at Carmarthen Quarter sessions when a feared well-to-do farmer of violent temper, Thomas Phillips, was tried for assault and an attempt to commit a rape, he was found guilty of a common assault and sentenced to two months' imprisonment. After the case, according to Edward Crompton Lloyd Hall, Esq., Barrister at Law in Newcastle Emlyn, some of the jury were so bullied by supporters of the defendant that they returned from outside the court and tried to reverse their decision by offering the excuse that they could not understand the English language and that they had not intended to return the guilty verdict. When called back to court, they unanimously recorded a non-guilty verdict and as a result of this, although the sentence could not be revoked, a representation was made to the Home Office which granted the prisoner a pardon, *C.J.*, 30 October 1846.

[78] See *C.J.*, 11 April 1845 where a correspondent wrote to the newspaper in support of the Revd. Thomas Evans, the vicar of Pembrey and Chairman of the parish's Select Vestry, when he had been accused of assaulting a female pauper.

[79] When Sarah Francis received a 6 months' custodial sentence in 1817 at Carmarthen Great Sessions for her part in a false rape accusation against gentleman Henry Griffiths, the court hearing how she had been coaxed to do so in return for money. The underlying motive was a grudge held against him by a David Griffiths, who demanded the return of some cattle and £100 in cash. N.L.W., C.G.S. 4/760/4/29 and 4/760/4/47.

[80] *Welshman*, 17 August 1832.

[81] *C.J.*, 2 December 1864.

[82] In Victorian Kent, the conviction rate in rape trials was only 41 per cent, compared with a figure of 74 per cent for felonies generally, Conley, *The Unwritten Law*, p.82.

[83] *C.J.*, 14 March 1845, 21 March 1851.

[84] N.L.W., C.G.S. 4/751/3/79; other cases were treated accordingly, see *C.J.*, 13 March 1846, 20 March 1846, 14 March 1851 and 14 January 1853.

[85] As stated by Sir Matthew Hale in 1736, cited by Carolyn A. Conley, *The Unwritten Law*, p.82.

[86] For newspaper coverage of judges' addresses where these recommendations were advised, and for examples of cases where they were applied, see *C.J.*, 11 March 1853, 15 July 1864 and 10 March 1865.

[87] *C.J.*, 10 March 1865.

[88] James Lloyd, found guilty of common assault at Carmarthen Summer Assizes after an initial charge of attempted rape, was sentenced to keep good conduct for two years, while James Lundy was given a sentence of 18 months' imprisonment for assault, *Welshman*, 24 July 1835 and 1 August 1845. The reduction of serious charges of sexual assault to common assault was not an infrequent occurrence in the Welsh courts and accounts in part for the light sentences given to some offenders. The severity of the sentencing depended heavily on the quality of evidence, age of defendant, his conduct and his standing in the community.

[89] James Williams, *Give me yesterday* (Llandysul, 1971), p.72.
[90] *C.J.*, 27 November 1863.
[91] *C.J.*, 2 August 1861.
[92] Barry Reay, " Sexuality in nineteenth-century England:the social context of illegitimacy in rural Kent", *Rural History,* 1, 2 (1990), pp.239-241.
[93] K.H. Connell, *Irish Peasant Society, four historical essays* (Oxford, 1968), pp.83-86.
[94] Nash, "Family and economic structure in nineteenth-century Wales : Llangernyw and Gwytherin in 1871", p.139.
[95] For instances of wills providing for illegitimate offspring in the eighteenth century, see Howell, *Patriarchs and Parasites*, pp.203-204.
[96] Parry-Jones, *My own folk*, pp.125-128.
[97] Williams, *Give me yesterday*, pp.60-61. Trefor Owen states that illegitimacy did bring a temporary "loss of status", but that this would be eventually cancelled out if in all other respects exemplary behaviour was displayed, and indeed sympathy would be felt at the hardships endured by a single mother in struggling to bring up her child, Trefor M. Owen, "Chapel and Community in Glan-llyn, Merioneth", in David Jenkins, (ed.), *Welsh Rural Communities*, p. 232.
[98] See Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, politics and society: the regulation of sexuality since 1800* (London, 1989), pp.61-62 for a brief account of some of the explanations for this discernible rise in the illegitimacy rates.
[99] N.L.W., Diocese of St. David's: Parish vestry minutes, Mynachlog-ddu, 10 July 1801.
[100] N.L.W., Diocese of St David's: Parish Vestry minutes, Abernant, 8 October, 1781. In her introduction to *Our mothers' land*, Professor John refers to instances where putative fathers were coerced to marry by being held over rivers while the burial service was recited as "persuasion" to marry, Angela V. John, (ed.), *Our mothers' land; chapters in Welsh women's history 1830-1939*, p.9.
[101] Gillis, *For better, for worse*, p.233.
[102] George Eyre Evans, *Lampeter* (Aberystwyth, 1905), pp.22-23.
[103] N.L.W.MS. 193D-224D: Notebook of Justice Samuel Heywood, Carmarthen circuit 1807-1820, 17041, no 29
[104] P.P., 1834, XXX-XXX1V, *Royal Commission into the Poor Laws*. The parishes involved are Amroth, Carew, Llanstadwell, Llandewi Velfrey, Narberth South, St. Issells and Narberth town. This reference was kindly given to me by Dr. Eric Morgan who is currently working on a Ph.D.thesis on poor law administration in Pembrokeshire.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Philpin, "Women and crime in nineteenth-century Pembrokeshire", p.202.
[107] *Welshman,* 17 July 1837, from correspondence of a freeholder of the county of Carmarthen describing the system with regard to illegitimacy before the changes in the Poor Law in 1834. Maria Banner's employers waited until she was near her confinement before dismissing her by sending her to the home of a poor relative. Maria's child was born in the cart in which she was conveyed, *C.J.*, 25 July 1856.
[108] Evans, *Lampeter*, pp.22-23.
[109] Comparing a similar sample of 29 bastardy cases involving men between 1821 and 1834, Philpin found that the women served on average three and threequarter times longer in prison. Only one man served as long as three months; for the others, most took the option of paying the fines and so remained in gaol only for a few days, see Philpin, "Women and crime in nineteenth-century Pembrokeshire", p.201.
[110] N.L.W., Diocese of St.David's Parochial Records: Parish vestry minutes, Llanbadarn Trefeglwys,1821-99; for examples of parishes trying to locate errant fathers, see Davies, "Aspects of Poor Law provision in Carmarthenshire prior to 1834", p117.
[111] H.P.R. /3/28: Minutes of the Select vestry, 7 January 1820, Parish of Steynton. I would like to thank Dr. Eric Morgan for suppying this reference.
[112] P.P., 1834, XXX-XXXIV, *Royal Commission into the Poor Laws*, parish of Narberth South.
[113] See Ursula Henriques, "Bastardy and the Poor Law", *Past and Present,* 36-38 (1967) for a description of the old poor law, the perceived need for reform and the reasoning behind the clauses and

implementation of the new Act. See also Lionel Rose, *The Massacre of the Innocents: infanticide in Britain 1800-1939* (London, 1986), pp.22-27. The legislation has been seen as strengthening the concept of the family unit by making women dependant on the family state, see Fiona Williams, *Social Policy: a critical introduction* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.153-154.

[114] Weeks, *Sex, politics and society: the regulation of sexuality since 1800*, pp.65-66.

[115] P.P.,1844, XV1, *Commission of Inquiry*, p.30.

[116] Ibid., p177.

[117] Ibid., p.56.

[118] Ibid., p.177.

[119] Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in western Europe, 1500-1800*, p. 269.

[120] P.P., 1844, XV1, *Commission of Inquiry*, p.227.

[121] Evans, *Rebecca and Her Daughters*, pp.173-174.

[122] Parry-Jones, *My own folk*, p.121.

[123] P.P., 1844, XV1, *Commission of Inquiry* , pp.144, 232.

[124] T.P.Ellis, *The Importance of Local Records* (Merioneth, 1911), p.178.

[125] The figures supplied to Mr. R.M. Neave, Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, on 6 July 1840 from the Pembroke Union, are as follows :

July 1837	-	30 June 1838	56 born
30 June 1838	-	1 July 1839	57 born
1 July 1839	-	30 June 1840	42 born

cited in Philpin, "Women and crime in nineteenth-century Pembrokeshire", pp.188-189.

[126] Jones, *Rebecca's Children*, p 134.

[127] P.P., 1844, XV1, *Commission of Inquiry*, p.203.

[128] *Welshman*, 10 April 1835, 30 October 1835.

[129] Jones, Rebecca's Children, p.133.

[130] Reay, "The social context of illegitimacy", p.234.

[131] Rose, *Massacre of the Innocents*, p.28. Making mothers responsible for bringing their own cases and divorcing the Poor Law authorities from the affiliation procedure only served to make a woman's position worse.

[132] *C.J.*, 5 July 1861.

[133] *C.J.*, 20 January 1854; for other examples, see 4 Feburary 1859, 25 July 1856, 11 March 1870, 10 March 1854. For cases where warrants needed to be issued and fathers were apprehended in Glamorganshire, see *C.J.*, 25 April 1845, 30 May 1845..

[134] *C.J.*, 24 Januaray 1862.

[135] C.J., 19 January 1855.

[136] *C.J.*, 4 February 1853; Professor Jones claims that many of the fathers in paternity suits were married men.

[137] *Welshman*, 15 June 1838; C.J., 11 March 1864.

[138] *C.J.*, 22 August 1845; *Welshman*, 20 January 1837.

[139] *C.J.*, 24 March 1854.

[140] *C.J.*, 5 June 1863.

[141] Conley, *The Unwritten Law*, p.122.

[142] *C.J.*, 24 August 1855, 24 May 1861.

[143] *C.J.*, 10 November 1854.

[144] *Cambrian*, 1 April 1826; see also another instance of breach of promise when the defendant called a series of male witnesses to testify that the plaintiff, his estwhile fiancee, had behaved immodestly and improperly. His defence was that he could not be expected to marry a girl who did not bear a good character, *C.J.*, 6 March 1868, 24 April 1868.

[145] *C.J.*, 9 June 1854; this attitude can be compared with that of rape cases involving young girls where very little consideration was given to their youth and inexperience. The general viewpoint from the male-dominated legal system was that females were temptresses at any age.
[146] C.R.O., Quarter Session Records for 1850.
[147] *C.J.*, 17 October 1845.
[148] *C.J.*, 19 September 1845, 9 November 1755, 11 March 1859, 20 June 1862 and 6 December 1861.
[149] *C.J.*, 26 September 1856.
[150] There was an additional problem in imposing custodial sentences on married men, for their family might be, as a consequence, rendered chargeable to the parish, P.R.O. (Kew), M.H. 12 15873, 598, (3426a) for a letter to the Carmarthen Union, 27 April 1839.
[151] *C.J.*, 1 May 1868.
[152] Minutes of the Haverfordwest Board of Guardians, this source kindly supplied by Dr. Eric Morgan.
[153] See *C.J.*, 7 January 1853, 9 September 1859, 6 January 1854. 24 June 1853, 23 July 1852 and the *Welshman*, 23 June 1837 for just a small sample of reports of child-dropping in south- west Wales.
[154] *C.J.*, 25 February 1853.
[155] *C.J.*, 31 July 1863.
[156] *C.J.*, 26 July 1867, 4 July 1856. Elizabeth Thomas pleaded that she left her children in the Carmarthen workhouse for 6 months while she travelled to Merthyr in order to look for work, *C.J.*, 7 May 1847.
[157] Philpin, "Women and crime in nineteenth-century Pembrokeshire", pp.187-188. The problem of abandoned children after 1834 was experienced widely and not just confined to Wales, with numbers rising sharply in Foundling hospitals and like institutions. John Gillis maintains that leaving a baby to nurse at the workhouse represented an indirect form of infanticide, if only because of the inappropriate diet given to very young babies, Gillis, *For better, for worse: British marriages, 1600 to the present*, p.241.
[158] See *C.J.*, 23 May 1845 for the attitude of a crowd of sensation-seekers who gathered around a baby who was found abandoned on a Carmarthen dung-heap.
[159] *C.J.*, 25 June 1847.
[160] *C.J.*, 7 January 1853, 5 March 1852; *Welshman*, 27 July 1838.
[161] *C.J.*, 21 August 1868.
[162] N.L.W. MS. 193D-224D: Notebook of Justice Samuel Heywood, Carmarthen circuit 1807-1820, no 27.
[163] *Cambrian*, 8 October 1808.
[164] Patricia Knight, "Women and Abortion in Victorian and Edwardian England", *History Workshop Journal*, 4 (Autumn,1977). p.60.
[165] Philpin, "Women and crime in nineteenth-century Pembrokeshire", pp.211-213.
[166] *C.J.*, 10 March 1849.
[167] N.L.W., C.G.S. 4/760/4/148; N.L.W. MS. 193D-224D: Notebook of Justice Samuel Heywood, Carmarthen circuit 1807-1820, 17041 no. 27; see also *Cambrian*, 26 April 1817. For other cases of men administering abortificants, see *C.J.*, 7 March 1845, 10 July 1863.
[168] When individuals were asked before the 1844 *Royal Commission of Inquiry for South Wales* whether infanticide had increased there was some doubt; while some believed that it had increased slightly, others were not so sure. There might well have been a reluctance on the part of witnesses to implicate Welsh womenfolk in the capital crime of murder.
[169] For examples, see *C.J.*, 1 August 1845, 16 April 1846, 21 May 1847, 20 March 1857 and 11 November 1864.
[170] Howell, *The Rural Poor*, p.221.
[171] *Welshman*, 18 July 1834.
[172] *Welshman*, 27 July 1838.
[173] *C.J.*, 10 August 1855; see also *C.J.*, 4 December 1863, 11 December 1863, 11 March 1864.

[174] Mark Jackson, *New-born Child Murder, women, illegitimacy and the courts in eighteenth- century England* (Manchester, 1996), pp.42-51.
[175] *C.J.*, 21 June 1861, 19 July 1861. No doubt the accepted belief that many babies' lives were extinguished at birth by suffocation, sometimes with the complicity of the midwife, holds true, although the present study has no evidence for this.
[176] N.L.W., C.G.S. 4/759/1/26.
[177] N.L.W., C.G.S. 4/757/1/93.
[178] N.L.W., C.G.S. 4/754/1/28, C.G.S. 4/745/4/11; both Lettice Richards and Ann John had visits off their former lovers with the hope they might confess the circumstances surrounding the deaths of their newborn babies and their whereabouts.
[179] See *C.J.*, 28 July 1848, 10 August 1849, 26 July 1850, 1 July 1853, 19 June 1863 and 28 February 1868.
[180] N.L.W., C.G.S. 4/761/2/ 56.
[181] N.L.W., C.G.S. 4/759/2/46.
[182] For results of inquests, see *C.J.* 11 February 1846, 13 October1848, 3 January 1851, 4 June 1858 and 31 July 1863.
[183] Rose, *Massacre of the Innocents*, p.70.
[184] *C.J.*, 25 July 1856.
[185] *C.J.*, 7 March 1862.
[186] N.L.W., C.G.S. 4/748/2/23, 4/757/1/61; *C.J.*, 5 March 1852, *C.J.*, 18 March 1853 and *C.J.*, 5 March 1852.
[187] *C.J.*, 19 July 1850; in the case of Elizabeth Rees, for example, despite the medical opinion of David Jones of Llandeilo, the surgeon who attended her dead baby, that the infant's death was most likely from suffocation, she was found guilty only of concealment with its attendant lesser sentence. N.L.W. C.G.S. 4/761/2/56.
[188] R.W. Ireland, " 'Perhaps my mother murdered me': child death and the law in Victorian Carmarthenshire", in Christopher Brooks and Michael Lobban, (eds.), *Communities and Courts in Britain 1150-1900* (London, 1997). Of the six prosecutions for murder of this sort between 1844 -1871, there were no convictions. A notable exception to this general trend in south-west Wales was that of Mary Prout of Pembrokeshire, whose six-week-old daughter was found in a coalpit in the vicinity of Amroth. Mary was actually sentenced to death, but this was later commuted to transportation, after a petition to save her life had been mounted. See *C.J.*, 27 May 1864 and 4 November 1864; for a full description of the case, see Philpin, " Woman and crime in nineteenth-century Pembrokeshire", p.230-233.
[189] Figures taken from the Criminal Registers for Great Sessions, Assizes and Quarter Sessions, under N.L.W. Film 854-5.
[190] Ireland, "Perhaps my mother murdered me", pp.243-244. There is some evidence to suggest that not everyone supported this attitude, however. A letter appearing in the *Welshman* criticised the later commutation of a sentence meted out for a concealment of birth, on the grounds that her prosecution had cost ratepayers, alone, over a hundred pounds. Ann Jones, who was convicted at Cardigan Assizes of concealment and given twelve months' imprisonment, was released within seven months, her sentence being reduced after the submission of new evidence. *C.J.*, 28 March 1845 and 4 April 1845.
[191] P.P., 1844, XV1, *Commission of Inquiry*, p.80. David Parry-Jones maintains that considerable leniency was extended to women suspected of killing their babies and cites an instance where the mother of three illegitimate children was given "a severe dressing down" by the local squire, the Chairman of the local magistrates, but reprieved of further action, Parry-Jones, *My own folk*, p.121.
[192] *C.J.*, 4 March 1859.

Epilogue

Women's flight from agricultural employment, as predicted in 1867 by government commissioners enquiring into the work of rural women and children, was to become a reality in the closing decades of the century. The actual extent of the retreat, however, is open to conjecture, since research undertaken on work books from the 1880s in Gloucestershire has suggested that far more women continued to work in casual farm labour than the official figures have indicated.[1] The emphasis given to the decline of field work in reports of Royal Commissions and the dramatic drop in figures featured in the censuses tend to disguise the fact that many women still continued to be employed outdoors in south-west Wales well into the twentieth century. This notwithstanding, there was a sizeable reduction nevertheless. A significant feature of the dwindling female agricultural workforce was the sharp decrease in numbers of girls entering farm service. Although female servants were still employed in the early years of the twentieth century, they were far fewer than formerly.[2] This difficulty experienced by farmers in engaging maidservants was felt particularly in Carmarthenshire on account of the county's proximity to the industrial districts. [3]

The reluctance of females to enter farm service accelerated as the century drew to a close, the losses noted between 1851 and 1871 decreasing even more substantially thereafter; the 25 per cent of females comprising agricultural wage earners in Carmarthenshire in 1871 (the highest percentage for any county in England and Wales) fell to 22 per cent by 1881 (the highest percentage among Welsh counties), a percentage that dropped still further to 14.6 by 1891.[4] While service in husbandry or domestic

service on farms had formerly been an important stepping stone for young girls in their working careers, from the 1870s they choose to bypass this hitherto significant opening in agricultural employment to pursue other opportunities. As a consequence, Welsh farms suffered from a shortage of trained female help, particularly in the dairy. It was even remarked that dairying would have been more prominent in Pembrokeshire had there been more trained servants to help with the burdensome work of butter making. [5]

Social commentators concerned about the drain of the rural workforce in the early decades of the twentieth century attributed this worrying trend to, at least with respect to females, a preference for situations in towns.[6] Work in private service was considered a better prospect to the long working hours, outdoor work and physically demanding duties undertaken in the farmhouse and farmyard.[7] Speaking out, one Swansea resident criticised the living conditions in farmhouses, with their uncomfortable, ill-ventilated rooms and wretched sleeping quarters, the long hours of work and the poor social life, and expressed no surprise that girls choose to work in towns, despite earning similar wages.[8] He was probably correct, although the defensive comments by farmers' wives on the difficulty of getting female help on farms go even further towards explaining the lack of female labour. Blaming "too much education", and dismissing claims of long hours of work, they argued that girls only wanted to be "genteel" and "to wear slippers instead of clogs", and so preferred shopwork or dressmaking.[9] This shift in attitude, evident since the mid-nineteenth century, was aided by greater opportunities which opened up after 1870, when, it was said, "girls were better educated and became more ambitious". [10]

A growing desire to see children, both sons and, after mid-century, even daughters, "better themselves", led to demands for education and the chance to learn English, a call that found expression in subsequent government legislation. The passing of Forster's education bill in 1870 providing elementary education for all working-class children in either the old voluntary schools or new Board schools, at last gave many girls opportunities previously denied them. Similarly, the decades following 1870 saw much improvement in the provision of middle-class girls' education, at the intermediate and higher level, as reformers sought to redress the balance of educational opportunity between girls and boys.[11] The Aberdare Report of 1881 on Welsh secondary and higher education thus paved the way not only for a network of co-educational intermediate schools to be established throughout Wales in the 1890s but also for female admission into the University Colleges.[12] It was the growing provision of elementary education which, however, had the most impact. While the 1870 Act was said to have "merely" increased opportunities and occupations for men, it was regarded as having "revolutionised the position of women in Wales", for, following the Act, girls were said to "have had their revenge" by taking greater advantage than boys of the opportunities available to them to spread their wings and leave agricultural work behind for the greater freedom, openings and social life afforded them in towns.[13]

In contrast to earlier years, when lack of local employment necessitated females migrating from Wales in search of work, by the end of the century the emphasis had altered perceptively. Many girls now choose to leave home, attracted by the greater opportunities, higher wages and better lifestyle in the towns. Rather than stay in farm service with an employer perhaps, as was often the case, for as long as ten years, it was

argued that "most of the single men and many of the single women" would have long since left for the industrial districts.[14] It was an outward flow of labour which was to continue into the twentieth century, for the 1911 Glamorganshire census recorded 7,111 Cardiganshire-born females living in the county as compared to 8,997 males and, in the Rhondda Valley, the figures were, respectively, 2,395 females and 3,210 males.[15] The number of females in comparison to males having left for industrial Glamorganshire from Cardiganshire and Pembrokeshire at the same census was 18,182 females as against 22,523 males.[16] Highly sought after in domestic service, both in Wales and many parts of England, by the close of the century Welsh girls continued chasing careers in dress-making, millinery and service in business establishments, while the better educated entered the fields of education and clerical work. [17] In London, in addition to milk vending, Cardiganshire migrants looked for work as shop assistants. [18]

For those who stayed in agricultural service (the evidence for Pembrokeshire suggests that it was the Welsh-speaking districts which retained the most female servants in husbandry), farm duties remained very similar to what they had always been.[19] In upland areas, during the harvest, a shortage of a male labour saw women carrying out much of the work. Besides the harvest, they were responsible for farmyard animals, looking after the calves and pigs, and worked in the fields, setting and picking potatoes, weeding corn, gathering stones, hoeing turnips, loading carts, harrowing with horse teams and threshing.[20] In the case of some farm girls, an outdoor life was preferred to the alternative of domestic work indoors.[21] Farm servants generally tended to remain with one employer for a number of years.[22]

Little change was also evident in wage scales, which, with male servants earning up to double the amounts, continued to be heavily weighted against females. In St Ishmael in the early 1890s, the £11 received by adult female servants was, by any standards, a paltry sum as compared to the £22 earned by a 23-year-old manservant. Even youths of 21, on the first rungs of adulthood, earned, at £18, substantially more.[23] Likewise, in 1908, despite being in short supply, female servants, experienced in domestic chores, dairy work, brewing and baking, who could supervise in the absence of the farmer's wife, were hired for between £16 and £20, while experienced young men received substantially more at £28 to £30. [24]

The greater proportion of females still employed in agricultural work, however, comprised family members. It has been estimated that in the early years of the twentieth century, of all the persons engaged in agriculture in south Wales and Monmouthshire, 60.2 per cent consisted of farmers and their relatives, compared to only 31.2 per cent for England and Wales as a whole.[25] Some indication of the scale of family-run farming practised in Wales can be gleaned from Ashby and Davies, who, writing about Welsh agriculture between the years 1871 and 192I, estimate that roughly half the work on Welsh holdings was done by the occupier and his family, the rest by paid labour.[26] A considerable number of farms in Carmarthenshire were being run in this way, while, in Cardiganshire, family labour prevailed to a greater extent than in the country as a whole, the hard work involved prompting one commentator to state that, in his opinion, the women there worked harder than those in other counties of south Wales. [27] The economic depression which came to beset the industry in the 1880s and which persisted until the mid-1890s served only to increase the farmer's reliance on his family, as his

only chance to escape bankruptcy and be able to pay mortgage interests and rent was to dispense with hired labour and use, instead, his own children, who at other times might have sought occupations outside the farm.[28] Farmers and their families were said to live "harder than the inmates of the workhouse", and were, at this time, far worse off than a labourer in steady employment.[29] Aside from occasional casual labour and domestic help, on the small farms the farmer's wife and daughter undertook to do any necessary work, continuing to be responsible for attending to cows, their milking, feeding and mucking out, caring for poultry and carrying out any of the other ancillary tasks required. In Cardiganshire, especially, daughters learned agricultural husbandry from childhood by following their mothers, so that by the age of fifteen they were able to do the dairying work and other tasks.[30] For children on small farms, one repercussion resulting from the daily grind of extra duties was a neglect of their schooling. They were said to have missed out on their education even more so than labourers' children.[31] Mr. Gwilym Evans, the ex-chairman of the Carmarthenshire County Council, remarked before the Welsh Land Commission of the 1890s:

> . . . the children, work harder than any other class in the county. Unless the custom is altered very considerably the boys and girls used to earn their breakfast before they got it and had to go to school, and after they went home from school they had a lot to do also. [32]

In contrast to farming families, where the economic contribution of the wife and children, if anything, had increased, the traditional cottagers' family economy was in

decline. Certainly by the end of the century, opportunities for women to earn money outside the marital home appear to have greatly diminished.[33] The chances of obtaining regular work in agriculture, for instance, the most fruitful source of female employment earlier in the century, had, by now, contracted substantially in the wake of new technological advances and the increased reliance by farmers on family labour. In Carmarthenshire, although women occasionally set potatoes and picked stones, their services were mostly sought for the hay and corn harvest, and even these opportunities had become restricted by the greater use of machinery in the form of threshing and binding machines.[34]

The traditional forms of cottage industry, such as knitting stockings, making flannel shirts and quilting, continued to some extent, although their scale was greatly reduced.[35] With local markets for cloth catered for by the traditional family-based mills and larger concerns producing high quality flannel and tweeds for the wholesale market, the woollen industry in Cardiganshire adapted to survive in the climate of mass production. [36] Amongst the other female occupations within the industry, women took on additional piecemeal work hemming and fringing shawls and blankets to finish at weekends in their own homes, in doing so avoiding the checks made by factory inspectors examining working hours.[37] Other longstanding forms of female employment, meanwhile, also decreased substantially. The closure of pits in the Pembrokeshire coalfield, due to lack of investment and structural problems of faulting and geography, saw women's work in the mining industry plummet. While in 1877, 84 women were employed in the county, by 1900 their number had decreased to just 11, although, as underestimates in agriculture and moonlighting evasions in the wollen trade have

indicated, just how accurately this figure portrays the full extent of female participation is open to conjecture.[38] By the turn of the twentieth century, what additional family income could be obtained, was derived from undertaking domestic chores similar to those done within their own homes, such as caretaking, cleaning and laundering in the homes of neighbours or in local public institutions, such as chapel and school.[39] Moreover, added to the difficulties of finding work were the problems associated with childcare. Despite the continued irregularities in school attendance after 1870, the increasingly compulsory element in children's education, rendered statutorily binding from 1880, would have inevitably restricted the earning capacity of cottage women who, no longer able to rely on older children to childmind their younger siblings, were hampered from working outside the home.[40]

Notwithstanding these factors, women, anyway, pressured into their domestic role, preferred not to work after marriage, and, it was said, felt pity for those did, for work outside the house was done out of necessity to earn money rather than out of choice.[41] Mindful of contemporary opinion regarding the suitability of fieldwork for females, many continued to show a disinclination for working out of doors, although harvest work, with its opportunities to converse and enjoy the open countryside, was thought to make a pleasant change from everyday life. [42]

To some degree, the rise in cash wages for agricultural labourers, which, over the closing three decades of the nineteenth century rose by as much as between 20 and 40 per cent, might have facilitated the withdrawal of wives from the workplace.[43] The reality for most, however, was that living standards continued to remain on the level of poverty. Investigations in 1919 into the wages and conditions in agriculture found that the wives

of labourers continued to struggle to budget their weekly incomes to provide the necessities for their families. In Pembrokeshire, for instance, one woman was reported as looking "quite worn out, and without hope", in her attempt to keep both herself and seven children on 17s. a week, a sum which allowed only bread and butter and treacle. The continuing problem of acquiring milk forced mothers to feed their babies on bread soaked in tea, a common practice in rural districts.[44] Unable to eke out their own family's money to provide for sufficient food, as late as the opening decades of the twentieth century many cottage women, with their husbands out at work and their children at school, survived on tea alone for their midday meal.[45] Providing footwear for their children proved another problem.[46] While foodstuffs and other household items were paid for out of the weekly budget, clothes and boots, unless handed down or allowed for out of money sent home by older children, would be usually obtained on credit, the money being paid back in instalments. [47] Only families living in the fast diminishing bound cottages fared a little better, for those with some land attached were able to produce eggs, butter, potatoes and the occasional ham to sell to the local store in exchange for other necessities. [48]

Even those with a little land, however, struggled to make ends meet and the inability to sustain their households drove a considerable number of husbands to look for work elsewhere. As more permanent opportunities opened up in the industrial valleys eastwards, seasonal work away took on a more permanent nature. The attraction of higher wages and the lack of local prospects drove many farm labourers towards the coalfields of Monmouthshire and Glamorgan where work was plentiful.[49] In remote villages near Llandysul and Newcastle Emlyn in Carmarthenshire, there were supposedly hundreds of cases where husbands had left to work in the mining districts, returning only

for short visits once or twice a year.[50] Cottage wives, meanwhile, were left behind to struggle to raise their families single-handedly, often for years on end, while maintaining themselves on the few acres that might have been attached to their cottage.[51]

The rural exodus which so concerned social commentators in late nineteenth-century Britain - as G.F. Millin and P.A. Graham for instance - did not just involve the young and single or married men, however, but whole families.[52] To many country dwellers, rural living represented shabbiness, stagnation and illhealth. The enduring features of the traditional white-limed Pembrokeshire country cottage, with its lack of damp courses and through ventilation and its dripping wet walls abutting onto earth banks, prompted the description "whited sepulches". [53] So unhealthy were they that the county was known as a tubercolis "black spot" within Wales as late as the 1940s.[54] In his 1913 Annual Report, the County Medical Officer of health stated that "in rural districts where cottages are small . . ., it is impossible to isolate cases in their own homes, the result being that the infectious disease is rarely confined to the first person being attacked, the occurrence of secondary cases being the rule".[55] Handed down from generation to generation, it was Pembrokeshire's womenfolk, who, largely confined indoors, and lacking any opportunities to breath fresh air (for leisure time was spent at an equally stuffy church or chapel), ranked above the national average for incidence of the disease. [56]

Besides the insalubrity of rural cottage accommodation, there was their isolation. Labourers' wives living far from neighbours, shops and chapel, and with children at school, suffered loneliness, which was exacerbated by a weakening of the bonds of interdependency between farming and labouring folk which had always been a strong

characteristic of Welsh rural society until the growth in wage labour and utilities.[57] Adding to these factors was the pull of the towns, which proved irrestistible to many, especially those aware of the disparities between rural and urban life, "with all that implied for cultural divergencies".[58] The attractiveness of convenience acted as a powerful inducement to entice a country woman to leave her rural roots. Perhaps the words of one Rhondda woman, spoken after briefly visiting her native Cardiganshire in the early 1900s, encapsulated the opinion of many women who hankered after a different lifestyle to what they normally experienced in the countryside. Unfavourably contrasting the inconveniences of rural living with the bustling thriving valley communities, she commented thus:

> We're fools to stay in a place like this. In Trearchy (sic) there's electric light. Just put your finger on the switch and the place lights up . . .Turn on the tap in the scullery and there's plenty of water . . . There are pavements to walk on . . . The street lamps are on all night . . . There are plenty of picture-houses for somebody to have some fun. If you haven't any dinner ready you just send the children round to the Bracchi (Italian) shop for fish and chips. On Saturday there are cheap trips to Cardiff. O yes, we're mugs to hang around here. [59]

Of course, few opportunities of this kind were available in rural-south west Wales, although by the late nineteenth century entertainments, now more secular in character, had spread to the countryside in the form of magic lantern shows, glees and concerts, while the already popular eisteddfodau were joined by other competitive

gatherings such as Spelling Bees and choir meetings.[60] The early 1870s saw the advent of the bicycle into Wales, introduced into Towyn in north Wales, for instance, in June 1869.[61] By the end of the century, bicycle riding was to prove popular with many people; even servant girls and boys possessing them and using every spare moment riding them.[62] Other chances for socialising were yet to emerge, however. The Mothers' Union, an offshoot of the church, was, by this time, still in its fledgling stage, and yet to appear were Women's Institutes and other recreations like the whist drive, village dances, reading and dramatic societies.[63]

Betokening some breaking down of barriers of traditional male exclusiveness on the social level, towards the end of the nineteenth century, in response to increasing *middle-class* female pressure for change, there would come about a dawning recognition on the part of male clubs and societies that they would have to make some concessions in the way of female participation. The committee of the Harlequin Club at Haverfordwest, it was reported in 1896, acknowledged the frequent complaints from ladies that, whilst every attraction was being provided for gentlemen, their needs were ignored, and, in response, were said to be considering laying on during their forthcoming winter season a series of social evenings to be open to members of the public, both male and female.[64] The committee's agenda for change, however, did not extend further than organising a number of social occasions.

For much of the rural population, work responsibilities continued to restrict time for recreational pursuits. Rarely going on a holiday, farmers' daughters might go to the coast or sea-side and sons on excursion trains for a couple of days.[65] Down to the 1890s, the most servants could hope for in a year were three or four days off, which included,

perhaps, a day's excursion to the sea-side or a large town, organised by the Sunday school, and a few half days to attend an eisteddfod, preaching assembly, or a fair. In addition, arrangements were made for servants to attend an evening prayer meeting or a singing class. In the southern parts of Cardiganshire, in the early 1900s, three days came to be recognised as holidays, namely 10 May, 10 November and "Mercher mawr", the second Wednesday in August, when there was a "big exodus" from the farms, while, in some places, a week's paid holiday, taken when changing employment, could be looked forward to.[66]

For most women who remained in the countryside, certain of the trends becoming apparent during the course of the nineteenth century continued. Cottage wives became even more the targets for the reforming zeal and administrations of well-intentioned middle-class reformers. Unable to tackle the all-too-evident poverty, reformers, instead, set out to raise living standards by improving the cleanliness of cottages and the culinary skills of cottage wives. Among the measures taken were a series of classes in general cooking and soup-making for villagers organised by Miss Powell of the Carmarthenshire mansion of Maesgwynne and her cook, while one female health worker, shocked at the low standards of hygeine in rural Wales in the first decades of the twentieth century, stated her intention of instructing one person in each village of her particular district in "nurses' ways", hoping that they, in turn, would teach others. Her other resolve was to hold lectures on such health topics as the benefits of fresh air to mothers. [67] Whether these good intentions actually transpired and, if so, had the desired effect, is unknown.

For reformers, fears of immorality and the dangers females could be exposed to in mixed company took on added impetus when hiring fairs, long regarded as being

degrading affairs for women, came under the spotlight for improvement.[68] Concerns regarding the possible demoralising effect of hiring days on respectable servant girls prompted, from Autumn 1890, the formation of a ladies' committee in Brecon for the purpose of separately registering and interviewing such girls at the Guildhall rather than in the streets. Although meeting with some success, with the November 1893 fair witnessing some 54 girls registering and 32 obtaining situations in this way, it was nevertheless acknowledged that old customs were difficult to eradicate.[69] Times nevertheless had changed, for, at the Portfield fair in Haverfordwest a few years later, although some females were still hired in the traditional manner, many more had been previously hired at home or from the purposely set up registry office.[70] By the early decades of the twentieth century, in Cardiganshire, also, most hiring had become privately-arranged affairs and effected up to two months before the year's end, although the shortage of labour had prompted this situation.[71] Whether or not, once again, such measures had the desired moral outcome is questionable. Certainly statistics for illegitimate births showed a decrease towards the last decade of the century, as can be seen for the Narberth Union in the 1890s with its ratio of 1.1 to every 1,000 births.[72] Rural areas, despite the downward trend, nevertheless continued to show the highest rates for illegitimate births, with figures of over 7 and 8 in every thousand recorded in many places. [73]

By the end of the century, apart from the need for some to work, respectable females were, by and large, confined to what was thought their righful place, namely, at home with their families, and the highest position countrywomen could aspire to in the wider social order, as well as within their families, was as mistress of the farm.[74] While

in the public sphere a small number might have served on municipal councils and school boards, national politics were firmly denied them.[75] Eloquent visiting speakers advocating female suffrage in Cardiganshire meetings in 1881, encountered heated arguments and overwhelming opposition. Opponents of female suffrage trotted out the, by now, familiar arguments that a woman's true destiny lay in marriage where her energies were engaged in fulfilling her role as a good and loving wife, responsibility for her welfare and interests properly residing with male family members. It was a situation which, according to the Conservative Member of Parliament for Pembrokeshire, J.H. Scourfield, in 1871, met with wives' approval for, not wanting the right to vote themselves, they preferred to leave their husbands represent them. [76]

While, by the end of the century, the concept of domesticity was so firmly embedded in Welsh culture as to become an inherent part of Welsh national identity and consciousness, women's voices were nevertheless still heard rallying, where necessary, in collective action against perceived injustices.[77] Informally, women continued to participate in collective action; there is thus widespread evidence that they continued to fly in the face of authority over issues that impacted adversely upon their lives, their families and the wider community. Rosemary Jones comments that women continued to participate in neighbourhood protest, using the ceffyl pren tradition of rough justice towards the "natural" enemies of the farming communities, the bailiff and auctioneer. Again they brought their own forms of shaming mechanisms to the fray. During the tithe wars in the 1880s and 1890s, women protesters were certainly not averse to confrontation. The 50 or 60 present at a tithe auction in Aberarth, Cardiganshire, in 1887 were noteworthy for being amongst the most difficult to manage of the protesters, and in

Newport, Pembrokeshire, in 1891, women attempted to divest a bailiff of his clothes with the objective of ducking him in a pond.[78] Their aggressiveness was further honed in the attack made on an unpopular tithe collector, who was forced to seek refuge in a house and be rescued by police in a desperate attempt to escape the hostility of a number of women who attacked him and tore his clothes.[79] In the Llanelli riots of 1911 which followed the industrial disputes there, women protesters were depicted as being akin to "petroleuses of the French Revolution". Their eager participation in the wholesale looting which occurred in the town was only halted while they sought to safeguard the clothing they had snatched. Discarding their old clothes, they hastily donned their new "finery", all thoughts of propriety conveniently forgotten. [80]

Women were reluctant, however, to further any causes for themselves in relation to their own work, as can be seen in relation to the farm workers' revolt which flared up inWales, mainly in the north, in the 1890s, where the plight of female farmworkers was subsumed within the struggle to raise awareness of their male colleagues' plight. David Pretty tells us that one female voice alone was heard publicly complaining of her conditions of service. By writing in protest to Ap Ffarmwr's (John Owen Jones') column in *Y Werin* newspaper in March 1890 of the hard toil and endless hours of work expected of females in farm service, which exceeded in severity even those of their male colleagues, "Morwyn Ffarm" was undoubtedly expressing the opinions of countless of her sisters.[81] Otherwise, here in north Wales, as elsewhere in Welsh rural communities, they remained silent. Any protest at the drudgery and low status which was the lot of female farm workers manifested itself, instead, in the visible decrease of their numbers in

agriculture, as many sought, and found, superior employment in the form of domestic service or dress making elsewhere.

While women participating in community protest risked social disapprobation, their involvement in the temperance society received public approval. If limited in scope, their participation allowed women to gain self-confidence and acquire valuable organisational experience through organising rallies, lobbying councillors and arranging alternative facilities to those selling alcohol, as well as to widen their horizons by virtue of the encouragement given them to participate in other activities, such as writing and publishing.[82] The movement added a dimension to women members' lives that took them outside the immediate confines of chapel and home, facilitating a degree of female consciousness, and acted as a stepping stone for further female involvement in other major issues affecting the Principality.[83] In addition, by the first decades of the twentieth century it was being suggested that women should help improve the economic and social conditions of the rural counties, where depopulation was accelerating in worrying proportions, by sitting on committees concerned with activities like bee, egg and poultry keeping, and joining milk recording societies.[84] One such woman who entered fully into activities geared towards rural improvements was Miss Kate Jenkins, the only female witness to give evidence before the Welsh Land Commission in the 1890s. Farming at Llangadog in Carmarthenshire, "she combined her agricultural work with a land agency, and with the voluntary service as vice-chairman of the local schoolboard". [85]

For all this fledgling participation in areas like serving on school boards, and sitting on municipal councils, joining in the temperance movement and promoting local initiatives towards rural regeneration, when all is said and done, however, the situation of

most women in south-west Wales improved only marginally over the closing decades of the nineteenth century. They remained in all spheres of life second-class citizens, too often taken for granted and, however unconciously, subjugated by their male counterparts. Theirs was still a world of cramped and under-nourished living conditions, of limited educational opportunities, of few satisfying job openings, of restricted leisure outlets, of a miserable adherence to supernatural beliefs, and of repressed sexuality. The editor of the *Cambrian News*, the enlightened John Gibson, was one of the few influential men prepared to speak out against the plight of women in Wales, whom he saw as being severely repressed and hampered by their lack of education and opportunity. Viewing women's dominant role in the 1904 Revival as a "vehement protest against the repression enforced upon women by what are called the 'free' churches", he saw their presence as an "un-self-conscious passionate protest of women against the forces which they are powerless to resist or control".[86] In a blistering attack in which he reproached nonconformists for ignoring their female members and failing to recognise their work within the church, he gave the reader some insight into the atmosphere of subjugation which he saw existing within the non-conformist chapel where women were encouraged to listen silently to men as they monopolised official office.

Nonconformity was, to John Gibson, more repressive than even the Church of England in its attitude towards women.[87] Although by no means all women frequented the chapels, of course, the strict attitude espoused by these nonconformist leaders would have permeated the wider community over which they held such sway. For some time to come, indeed, women in rural Wales would be expected to conform to the tenets of this influential chapel-based culture.

[1] C. Miller, "The Hidden Workforce: female field workers in Gloucestershire, 1870-1901", *Southern History*, 6 (1984), pp.139-161.
[2] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.56.
[3] Ibid., p.56.
[4] P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, pp.600-601.
[5] Ibid., p 606; butter making continued in importance in south-west Wales while the farms near towns and railway links concentrated on liquid milk production, see P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, pp.7,43.
[6] G.R. Carter, "Agricultural Labour in Wales", in anon. *Social Problems in Wales, Being a series of lectures on some aspects of the Social problems, more particularly in rural Wales*, given at the third annual Session of the Welsh School of Social Science (London, 1913), pp.66,121. To ameliorate this situation it was suggested that working conditions within farmhouses be improved and girls provided with a good domestic education..
[7] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.57.
[8] P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, p.704.
[9] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.57.
[10] P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, p.605. The widening opportunities for females, and the alacrity in which they were taken up, lies at odds with Alice Clark's argument that capitalism diminished women's choices; see Alice Clark, *Working life of women in the seventeenth century* (London, 1968, first published 1919).
[11] P.P., 1870, X111, *Women and children in agriculture*, p.47.
[12] W. Gareth Evans, "Equal Educational Opportunities for Girls and Women in Victorian Wales: the Contribution of the London Welsh", *Trans. Cymmrodorion Soc.* (1995), pp.123- 140. The increased provision of intermediate and secondary schools for girls heightened female social mobility although there were less opportunities for them to advance after leaving school than those for boys. Figures given for four county schools at Gowerton, Ystalyfera, Neath and Aberdare, in Glamorganshire, for 1901-1907, indicate that a large proportion of girls (half at Ystalyfera and nearly half at Gowerton, for example), entered the teaching profession with the remainder either opting to work in a variety of clerical, nursing and dressmaking situations or ending up at home. Very few entered any other professions and far more boys took on clerical work in comparison to girls, Gordon Roderick, "Social mobility and secondary education in Glamorgan, 1870-1914", *Trans. Cymmrodorion Soc.* (1996), pp.113-4.
[13] P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, p.605.
[14] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.58.
[15] Ibid., p.43.
[16] Ibid.
[17] P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, p. 605.
[18] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.9.
[19] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.124.
[20] P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, p.607.
[21] Ibid.
[22] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.121.
[23] P.P., 1893-94, XXXV1, *The Agricultural Labourer*, p.71.
[24] *Pembrokeshire Herald*, 9 October 1908.
[25] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.5.
[26] A.W.Ashby and J. Llefelys Davies, "The Work Efficiency of Farm Organisation in Wales, 1871-1921", *The Welsh Journal of Agriculture* (1929), p.50.

[27] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, pp.44,46,54. The valuable help given by family members enabled Welsh farms to stave off the worse excesses and vicitudes of agricultural depression. It is a pattern which has continued , for even up to the present day women have been instrumental in their support of the diversification programme needed for the survival of Welsh farming, see Shan Ashton, "The Farmer needs a wife: farm women in Wales", in Jane Aaron et al.,(eds.), *Our sisters' land: the changing identities of women in Wales* (Cardiff, 1994).
[28] P.P., 1893-94, XXXV1, *The Agricultural Labourer*, pp.5-6.
[29] P.P., 1882, XV, *Commission on Agriculture:* Mr Doyle's Report, p.7.
[30] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.45.
[31] P.P., 1882, XV, *Commission on Agriculture*: Mr. Doyle's Report, p.7.
[32] P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, p.603.
[33] P.P., 1893-94, XXXV1, *The Agricultural Labourer*, p.31.
[34] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.12; Parry-Jones, *Welsh country upbringing*, pp.59-61.
[35] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.59; Tibbott, " Knitting stockings in Wales - a domestic craft", p.62; Parry-Jones, *Welsh country upbringing*, 37
[36] Jenkins, "Rural Industry in Wales", pp.106 - 126.
[37] Ibid., p.105.
[38] John, *By the Sweat of their Brow*, pp.71-72.
[39] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.59.
[40] Horn, *Education in Rural England 1800-1914*, pp. 266-270; Gareth Elwyn Jones and Gordon Roderick, *A history of education in Wales* (Cardiff, 2003), p.64.
[41] Roberts, "Women's strategies, 1890-1940", p.230.
[42] P.P., 1893-94, XXXV1, *The Agricultural Labourer*, p.68; P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land*, p.607; the fact that less women worked in north Wales was attributed to their "more exalted" position, see Ibid., p.601.
[43] Howell, *Land and People in Nineteenth-Century Wales*, p.100.
[44] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, pp.19,128.
[45] P.P., 1893-94, XXXV1, *The Agricultural Labourer*, p.63 ; P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and Conditions*, p.52. It was thought that the drinking of tea at every mealtime caused indigestion and anxiety was expressed at the effects of such habits on the health of future generations.
[46] George Ewart Evans, *Where beards wag all, the relevance of oral tradition* (London, 1970), pp.211-212.
[47] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.129.
[48] Ibid.,pp.54,128.
[49] Ibid., pp.7,125.
[50] Ibid., p.62.
[51] Ibid, p. 46 describes one Cardiganshire man, turned collier, who having left his family for 30 years to work away, returned home once a year to give labour service to his landlord at harvest time.
[52] P.A. Graham, *The Rural Exodus* (London, 1892); G.F. Millin, *Life in Our Villages* (London, 1891).
[53] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.126.
[54] *Pembrokeshire Telegraph Almanack*, 1940
[55] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.127.
[56] *Pembrokeshire Times*, 18 September 1917; John Cule, *Wales and medicine: an historical survey from papers at the ninth British Congress on the History of Medicine at Swansea and Cardiff, 4-8 September, 1973* (London, 1975), p. 81.
[57] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.6; D.E. Jones, *Plwyfi Llangeler ar Phenboyr* (Llandysul,1899), p.332.

[58] Philip Jenkins, *A History of Modern Wales 1536-1990* (NewYork, 1992), p.237.
[59] Words taken fron the autobiography of B.L.Coombes, *These Poor Hands* (1939) and quoted by Dai Smith in *Wales: a question for history* (Bridgend, 1999), p.56.
[60] Howell, "Recreation and Leisure, 1815-1974", pp.443-445.
[61] *Cambrian News,* 26 June 1869.
[62] Morgan, *The history and antiquities of Newchurch,* p.32.
[63] Davies, *Secret Sins*, pp.219-223.
[64] *Pembrokeshire Herald,* 30 October 1896
[65] P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land,* p.634.
[66] Ibid., p.611; P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, pp.14, 49.
[67] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, pp.14, 49; *Queen's Nurses Magazine,* 1V,2 (31 August 1907) p.59, cited in Horn, *Victorian Countrywomen*, p.217.
[68] Gibson, *Agriculture of Wales*, pp.50-51.
[69] P.P., 1896, XXX1V, *Royal Commission on Land,* pp.609-610.
[70] *Pembrokeshire Herald,* 9 October 1908.
[71] P.P., 1919, 1X, *Wages and conditions*, p.46.
[72] P.P., 1893-94, XXXV1, *The Agricultural Labourer*, p.63.
[73] Davies, *Secret Sins*, pp.164-166.
[74] Jenkins, *The Agricultural Community in south-west Wales*, pp.142-143.
[75] Wallace, *Organize! Organize! Organize!*, p.163. One Cardiganshire farmer was quoted as stating that the former were "minor things, not equal to that of the State and should not be placed in the same category." See also Hollis, *Ladies Elect - Women in English Local Government, 1865 - 1914*, p.209. The first woman to stand on a school board in Wales was Rose Crawshay, in the newly-created Merthyr School Board
[76] Wallace, *Organize! Organize! Organize!*, pp.161-162.
[77] Jones, "'Separate Spheres': women, language and respectability in Victorian Wales", pp.195-199.
[78] Jones, *Women, community and collective action: the "Ceffyl Pren tradition"*, pp.33-34. At a neighbourhood level, women's protests continued down to the end of the nineteenth century but because the discourse of "traditional" and "modern" politics has tended to separate the two forms, their role has been unrecognised within the wider structures of formal politics.
[79] Davies, *Secret Sins: sex, violence and society in Carmarthenshire, 1870 – 1920*, p.288.
[80] Ibid., pp.147, 151.
[81] Pretty, "Women and Trade Unionism in Welsh Rural Society, 1889 – 1950", pp.5-13. Efforts made to try and improve the conditions of service on farms concentrated on male labourers only. It was expected that when their lot improved so, too, would those of female farm workers. In the event this did not happen, for a reduction in male hours of working (to 12 a day) did not extend to females who were still expected to work from 5.30 am. to 9 pm.
[82] Lloyd-Morgan, "From Temperance to Suffrage?", pp.143-145.
[83] Ibid., pp.145-148.
[84] Carter, "Agricultural Labour in Wales", p.66.
[85] Horn, *Victorian Countrywomen*, p.128.
[86] *Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers' Gazette*, 16 December 1904.
[87] *Cambrian News and Welsh Farmers' Gazette*, 16 December 1904.

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